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THE STORYTELLER ROLE

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From the day on which the metropolitan newspapers dutifully print an obituary smelling of the dust of the filing cabinet, the response to the death of an important literary figure usually falls into a fairly set pattern. Such has been the case with Sherwood Anderson.

His friends and admirers, given opportunities to memorialize him in the literary journals, have quite appropriately, if somewhat disproportionately, dealt in personal reminiscences, emphasizing the qualities that marked the man rather than those that signalized his special achievements as a writer, except in so far as the two were the same. Magazines have dug up and printed a few hitherto unpublished stories that will scarcely send many readers back to the earlier writings of Anderson. A posthumous volume or two has been scheduled. Is there more to be said now? Or is Anderson ready to be left to time and the literary historian?

There are those of us who never saw the man face to face, who never had an opportunity to be caught by the charm of what must have been a rare personality, one which, we are told, inevitably called up intimations of Mark Twain, Walt Whitman, and even Lincoln. We belong to a group that might be loosely classified as simply the readers of Anderson. We were on the scene to catch something more than just a fresh note in his first books; we have continued to read him with varying degrees of interest and satisfac-

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tion—in many cases with distinctly waning enthusiasm. We may even sympathize with that symptom of current literary taste which provoked one writer on the subject recently to say somewhat acidly, "Let them consider him passé at Harvard." Maybe this is the time for such a reader to re-examine Anderson's writing in an effort to strike a somewhat soberer balance than has been achieved by the generous, and sometimes sentimental, estimates of the man that have appeared in recent months.

A rereading of his novels only substantiates the commonly held view that his achievements as a novelist fall far below his achievements in the field of the short story. For this reason the emphasis here will be centered upon the short stories.

Early in his career Anderson deliberately assumed the role of storyteller. He entitled his first autobiographical work *A Storyteller's Story*. Almost everything he wrote about his art and about himself as an artist—and almost everyone agrees that he wrote a great deal of nonsense on this subject—is a self-dramatization of the storyteller. In an essay which must have been written not long before his death, he said:

But I am not going to try to set myself up as a thinker. I have never put a very high valuation upon myself as a thinker. I am, however, a man in love with the art of writing, and if I am anything of any importance at all to my fellows it is as a story teller and a story teller must always be concerned, first of all, with human life.

The adoption of this role meant something more than just the choosing of the profession of writing stories. It meant creating a special atmosphere that would keep the reader constantly aware that he was in the presence of a yarn-spinner and thus immersed in all the associations that the term "storyteller" might call up in his mind. The terms "story" and "storyteller" appear as frequent reminders in the stories themselves. Often the reader is asked not to identify himself with the action unfolded but to remain seated in comfort amid familiar surroundings, always aware that opposite him sits the storyteller, a complete stranger, who in some unaccountable way has come into possession of a story he insists on telling. Sometimes Anderson did permit the storyteller to identify himself to the extent of appearing as a shadowy "I" to serve as the recipient

of a character's account of himself. At other times he allowed one of his characters to tell his own story in the first person and thus to achieve a full fictional reality bounded by the illusion created by the story.

Whatever his artistic motives may have been, this insistence upon permeating his stories with the flavor of the storyteller telling his tales to a rapt audience is important in the case of Anderson because it serves as a possible key to the technical imperfections which have caused many of his readers to be dissatisfied even with some of his best stories. The problem takes on semantic implications. What for him appears to have been a literary convention adopted to simplify and humanize the art of storytelling has, in many quarters, come rather to be regarded as a convention for increasing the range and subtlety of the novel or short story. Some of the framed stories of Henry James or the Marlow stories of Joseph Conrad might be offered as cases in point. Marlow does not appear in *The Heart of Darkness* merely to record a series of events. He is indispensable. It is his presence that gives the story much of its meaning, for it is through the impact of the sinister environment of the African jungle upon his normal sensibility that the fatal warping of the character of Kurtz is made understandable.

Thus, at the risk of almost inevitable oversimplification, it becomes possible to distinguish between at least two strongly marked sets of associations attached to the storyteller convention and to show that Anderson actually fitted himself into neither the one nor the other. He employed a technique which strongly suggested the one, but he imposed that technique upon subject matter that just as strongly suggested the other in its emphasis upon the devious workings of the psychological processes and in its use of the storyteller as a means of commenting on the story as he went along.

At the outset he undoubtedly turned to the familiar, if not wholly defined, set of associations stemming from the early oral tradition of storytelling which summons up an image in almost anyone's mind of the storyteller as a man with a gift for seeing the narrative possibilities both in experience and in his own imagination coupled with the ability to order his material simply and vividly. This line of associations leads almost immediately to a particular type of story—the

simple, sequential plot narrative of the once-upon-a-time variety. Here Anderson encountered his first obstacle because this was not the kind of story he wanted to tell. Plot development in terms of a sequence of events interested him far less than the revelation of character in terms of a relationship with another individual or in terms of a single illuminating situation, and once this kind of subject matter is set in the storyteller frame, it inevitably suggests the painstaking craftsmanship of a whole group of modern writers who have chosen to explore this vein.

Actually, all that Anderson found useful to his purposes in the earlier storyteller convention was the element of seeming artlessness and naïveté usually regarded as characteristic of these homespun forms of oral storytelling. Genuine artlessness carries great conviction, but conscious artlessness, unless rigidly controlled, can easily slip into the garrulousness of the most tiresome gossip, and far too often this is the quality that Anderson's writing suggests.

The assumption of complete objectivity, of complete aloofness, on the part of the author, if he is to establish and preserve the illusion of reality, has long been one of the most readily accepted literary conventions. Most attempts on the part of modern writers to deviate from this pattern are regarded as artful and as making more than ordinary technical demands upon the writer if they are to succeed.

"My dear Mr. Bennett," said his lady to him one day, "have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?" In a single sentence, barriers of time and space have been broken down. The illusion is created. We are on the spot and there we remain until we close the book. We may sense Miss Austen around many a corner, but never once do we actually catch a glimpse of her. Here, as in an imposing list of novels and short stories, every effort has been made to efface the storyteller as such.

It should be possible to say the same of a story that begins: "Upon the half decayed veranda of a small frame house that stood near the edge of a ravine near the town of Winesburg, Ohio, a fat little old man walked nervously up and down." The story, "Hands" (1919), goes on to characterize the man, Wing Biddlebaum, with his "slender expressive fingers, forever active, forever striving to conceal themselves in his pockets or behind his back." The loneliness of his life is

indicated by the passing of a wagonload of berrypickers who shout callous remarks at him. In his twenty years in Winesburg, he has made only one friend, a young reporter, whose curiosity to get behind the story of the nervous hands is eventually aroused but never satisfied.

At this point in the story this sentence suddenly appears: "The story of Wing Biddlebaum is the story of hands." Something has happened. The spell is broken. The reader is no longer on that half-decayed veranda near Winesburg but rather back in his own quarters listening to the voice of the storyteller, or, worse still, he may simply be shocked into sudden awareness of the fact that he is staring at page 9 of a printed book.

What actually must have happened was that Anderson saw no way of introducing the tragic key-episode which had befallen his central character twenty years before other than by stepping in himself as the omniscient author and telling us what only Biddlebaum knew but under no circumstances could reveal—the account of his unfortunate career as a schoolteacher whose caressing hands got him into trouble when a half-witted boy misinterpreted his affectionate touch and caused him to be driven from the town in disgrace. The stuff of a fine story is here, and the symbolism of the hands is perfect for the purpose, but as the story stands it is seriously flawed by its clumsy mechanics.

At the outset the story seems to be cast in a dramatic mold. A stage is set, but nothing ever happens except that the man finally leaves the veranda to go in to wash his dishes and seek his solitary bed. The real action had taken place twenty years before, but the only way the author found to introduce it was to break through the dramatic illusion he had already built up by stepping out to the center of the stage in his own person and saying: "Let us look briefly into the story of the hands. Perhaps our talking of them will arouse the poet, who will tell the hidden wonder story of the influence for which the hands were but fluttering pennants of promise."

Anderson was seldom content to tell a story from a wholly objective point of view—to keep himself strictly out of it. He had such a strong conviction that whatever gifts he had as a writer were largely gifts of love and understanding of his fellow-man that he

must early have discovered the need to make himself a part of every story he told so that it might be suffused with warmth and sympathy. But having, in one guise or another, made himself a part of the essential fabric of his stories, he was unwilling—or unable—to live up to the technical obligations he had assumed by adopting an announced point of view.

It is on a similar score that "The Triumph of the Egg" (1921), one of his best-known and most highly regarded stories, falls short of the kind of artistry that marks the short story of genius. This tale is told from what might be called a dual point of view. It is a record of childhood experience as recalled and interpreted by the child now grown to manhood. It is told in a leisurely, conversational manner that permits a generous sprinkling of unnecessary, homely details and philosophical digressions as means of achieving a warmly alive atmosphere. Its blend of humorous and pathetic implications is appropriately accomplished by the recurrent mention of the egg in a symbolism which, though insistent, never seems to be forced. These are among the strong points in the story's favor.

The boy is giving his account of his family's struggle to get ahead in the world. Their attempt at chicken farming having ended in a dispiriting failure, they pack up and leave, taking with them as their most vivid reminder of the experience a collection of monstrous chicken-births preserved in alcohol in glass bottles and treasured by the father in the hope that their grotesqueness will some day give them value. The mother, bitten with ambition for her menfolk, persuades her husband to open a restaurant across from a railroad station located about a mile from the nearest town. To get any business they have to keep the restaurant open at night. That means that the woman manages it during the day and the man during the night.

He gets a dim inspiration that he may be able to attract the young people of the town by making the place a center of entertainment with himself as a kind of jolly innkeeper, a role hardly suited to his taciturn temperament. The mother and son are asleep upstairs when his first opportunity presents itself to try out on a customer his abilities as an entertainer. The two sleepers are made startlingly aware of his defeat when he storms into the bedroom in a rage, bear-

ing in his hand a single egg which has been the instrument of his downfall.

What really took place in the room below, the narrator does not know, because, as he says, "His explanation has gone out of my mind." But this is how he explains why he is able to go ahead and completely fill in the scene that was enacted while he slept. "As to what happened downstairs. For some unexplainable reason I know the story as well as though I had been a witness of my father's discomfiture. One in time gets to know many unexplainable things."

Again Anderson had found himself in a bad spot, and what he did was to play on his readers' sympathies to help him over the tight place. Having bathed his story in a very human atmosphere of kindness, he, in turn, asked his readers to be kind to him, a well-meaning but untutored storyteller, and help him out of his difficulty by not insisting too much on absolute plausibility, inasmuch as he really had a story worth telling. Countless readers have undoubtedly accepted his lame explanation and passed by that dubious point in the story without even noting the creaking framework, but there it is, and, having once noticed it, no discriminating reader can go back to the story again and hope to get full satisfaction out of it.

"Death in the Woods" (1933) set up much the same kind of challenge for its creator. Again we are in the presence of a narrator who is frankly engaged in the process of piecing a story together out of childhood memories. This frame would seem to justify itself here because the significance of the whole lies not so much in the stuff of the story being told as it does in two other factors—the original impact of the experience upon the narrator as a boy and the larger meaning he is able to read into the story years later when his own increased fund of experience has added to his understanding.

To hold such a complex pattern together, it seems essential that the reader's understanding of the material should grow at the same pace as the narrator's, but this is not what happens. The reader is allowed to be an eyewitness at the most important scene in the story—a scene which neither the narrator nor any other living person saw and which he was able to reconstruct partially only years later after he had had a comparable experience.

The tale within the framework concerns a poor woman whose life

of hardship ends with her death in the woods on a cold winter night. Accompanied by a pack of dogs, she had been returning from the village with a sack of provisions, but, overcome by exhaustion, had sunk down at the foot of a tree. The dogs, momentarily reverting to savagery, had raced in a circle around the dying figure, and, as soon as they had made certain that she was no longer alive, had seized and devoured the provisions, stripping away the woman's clothes in their eagerness to get at the sack on her back but leaving her body untouched.

The only part played by the narrator in this episode is that of spectator among the group of townsmen who come to remove the body. The rest of the story, which is an account of the woman's sordid life, is recalled largely from hearsay in the community. Inevitably, the most vivid scene in the story is the fully conceived, gruesome death-scene in the woods which no one witnessed. As in "The Triumph of the Egg," a belated effort is made on the part of the narrator to explain how he could have known what happened. He says, "I knew all about it afterward, when I grew up to be a man, because once in the woods in Illinois, on another Winter night, I saw a pack of dogs act just like that." A somewhat lame and contrived explanation at best and one that certainly would fall far short of accounting for some of the very specific circumstances presented in the actual scene. Besides, the explanation comes after that very tenuous thread of belief that links the reader to the author has snapped never to be wholly mended again.

Why is it that the two stories of Anderson that have appeared more often than any others in anthologies should have been "I'm a Fool" (1923) and "I Want To Know Why" (1921)? One possible answer is that, among their other virtues, they have also the virtue of being relatively free from the kind of structural flaws that have been emphasized in these pages. Both stories are fortunate enough to have been set in a framework that afforded their creator few opportunities to go astray. Like some of those already discussed, these two are written in the first person, but, unlike the others, in each of these the hypothetical teller of the story is also the central character and is, therefore, telling a story about himself. This greatly lessens the chances of having to introduce a scene at which the narrator was not present or of which he could have known nothing. It is true that

it is not without embarrassing stage whispers to direct him some distance over unfamiliar country roads at night that the "I" of "I Want To Know Why" follows his idol to the spot where the somewhat mawkish climax of the story takes place, but on the whole these two stories do not betray the reader's confidence. They achieve a homely and human honesty such as Anderson always strove for but didn't always attain.

No especial note has been taken thus far of certain stylistic eccentricities which, though always present to a degree, became more pronounced in his later writing: he had, particularly, the habit of using extremely short paragraphs composed of sentences which fell into this sort of primer pattern: "He ran. He crept through the bushes. He was seeking a goddess who walked by the seashore in silence" (*Italian Poet in America* [1941]). This self-conscious simplicity, which seemed to encourage him in the direction of a kind of impressionistic formlessness, only further served to alienate readers during the last decade of his life.

There has been a deliberate attempt in this study to focus almost exclusive attention upon Anderson's artistic limitations in spite of the danger of appearing to put too high a value on form at the expense of substance. This danger has not been disregarded; nor has it been forgotten that technical facility in writing often leads merely to slickness and that the slick story can never achieve a very high place in the scale of literary values.

The statement has been made that it is "the strong human quality in Anderson which draws one to him and leads one to prefer him sometimes to those who are undeniably superior as artists." It is not because these are the words of one man but because they have been echoed by many of those who have written on Anderson in the brief period since his death that they deserve consideration. They are misleading in two major respects. In the first place, they tend to obscure his striking lack of range. Both his novels and his short stories are limited to the persistent exploration of the theme of frustration, to an unabated concern over the fate of the "grotesques" of this world rather than that of fairly normal people, to a fumbling preoccupation with sex—more specifically, to the recurrent problem of justifying the husband who abandons his unsatisfactory wife—and, finally, to the theme that embraces all the others, the unsolvable

plight of those who feel strongly but cannot think. As such, this range would not have been too meager had the writer achieved the artistry necessary to give variety and freshness to his frequent returns to already trodden paths.

This leads to the second, and probably the most important, respect in which statements such as the one above are open to question. Artistry of a high order Anderson never did achieve, nor have his admirers claimed it for him; but they have shown themselves to be far too willing to close their eyes to the vital importance of this element in any art form. This is why this phase of his work has been given major emphasis here and why the attempt has been made to show that, once the full extent of his artistic failing is revealed, the whole fabric of his art falls apart. As criticism, structural analysis has its limitations, but it is only by means of just such analysis that the really serious flaws in Anderson's writing can be fully exposed. Like his characters, he was not a thinker; to this important fact his art stands as final testimony.

Perhaps, after all, Anderson was really a storyteller and not a story-writer and should have trusted wholly to the transitory spell by which the human voice suspends possible disbelief rather than to the written word which, if it lingers at all, must eventually be subjected to that sharper scrutiny which insists that form and substance must be made one if the story illusion of reality is to be held intact.

THE VALUE OF EMERSON TODAY

FLOYD STOVALL¹

Emerson has a peculiar importance for all students of American literature because he stands central in American thought. Into him flowed the currents of Puritanism, deism, Unitarianism, and transcendentalism, and out of him they flowed again, but transformed and unified by his thinking into a new idealism that expresses the spiritual meaning of America. It has been often said that there are two sides to the typical American character and that these two op-

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posite sides are represented by the idealism of Jonathan Edwards and the pragmatism of Benjamin Franklin, both belonging to the eighteenth century. Emerson represents both sides in the nineteenth century, although in his lectures and essays he emphasized spiritual more than material values. He believed that the strength of democracy is in the individual and that the strength of the individual is in his moral sense. It is the moral sense that draws individuals together, integrates society, and makes possible the democratic way of life. Emerson, more than any other American writer, helps us to understand this ideal element in democracy.

He was strongly attracted to the idealistic philosophy. "Idealism," he writes in *Nature*, "sees the world in God. It beholds the whole circle of persons and things, of actions and events, of country and religion, not as painfully accumulated, atom after atom, act after act, in an aged creeping Past, but as one vast picture which God paints on the instant eternity for the contemplation of the soul."² Emerson is unwilling to accept as final, however, a theory that denies the existence of matter. "It leaves me," he complains, "in the splendid labyrinth of my perceptions, to wander without end." It makes nature foreign to man and does not account for the fact that man is conscious of some relation between himself and nature. He is willing to accept the theory of idealism only as a "useful introductory hypothesis" which serves "to apprise us of the eternal distinction between the soul and the world."³ The hypothesis answers the question, "What is matter?" but it does not explain the whole meaning of nature.

There remain to be answered still the questions, "Whence is matter?" and "Whereto?" Emerson says the answers to these questions "arise to us out of the recesses of consciousness"; in other words, by intuition. Nature, he discovers, is the creation of spirit; but spirit is a power within nature, not outside it, and also within the soul of man. This spirit, which is the Supreme Being, "does not build up nature around us, but puts it forth through us, as the life of the tree puts forth new branches and leaves through the pores of the

² *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Boston, 1903), I, 4. All references to Emerson's writings are made to this edition, in twelve volumes, which will be hereafter referred to as *Works*.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

old. As a plant upon the earth, so a man rests upon the bosom of God; he is nourished by unfailing fountains, and draws at his need inexhaustible power."⁴ Nature, it therefore appears, is, like man, an incarnation of God; but man is an incarnation in the realm of consciousness, whereas nature is an incarnation in the realm of the unconscious. Since nature is not subject to the human will, it has not degenerated but stands as originally created, a perfect exposition and illustration of the divine mind. The laws of nature are the laws of God under the limitation of matter, and in so far as man exists within the sphere of these laws he must obey them. This is the meaning he gives to Fate. Fate is nature, circumstance, what a man may do now; it "is a name for facts not yet passed under the fire of thought; for causes which are unpenetrated."⁵

Thus he explains the origin and present condition of nature. But, "Whereto? What is it for?" How does he answer his third question? He answers it by saying that nature is a discipline. It is a discipline for the understanding in intellectual truths. Science seeks to understand nature and in the process improves the intellect of the scientist. Nature is also for the reason a discipline in moral truths. The reason reveals behind the physical laws of nature the universal moral law which gives it unity. This distinction between the understanding and the reason, originating with Kant and popularized in England and America by Coleridge, is a very important one in Emerson's philosophy. By means of the understanding the human mind wins a gradual and painful mastery of the laws of nature for material ends; by means of the reason it becomes one with that spirit which is the living source of all laws and masters them to spiritual ends. It is the power of the reason that reveals nature as the picture which God "paints on the instant eternity for the contemplation of the soul."

It is quite evident that Emerson will not accept without qualification the theory that matter does not exist, even though he calls nature an apparition of God. Was he, then, a dualist, a believer in the separate existence of two independent substances? He has been so classified by some critics. The word "dual" occurs at least once

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁵ "Fate," *Works*, VI, 31.

in his writings. This is in the essay on "Fate," where he states that Fate and Power are the opposite facts of a dual world.⁶ This is precisely the distinction between soul (Power) and nature (Fate) which I have already discussed. The word "dualism" occurs at least twice. One instance is in the chapter on "Idealism" in the book *Nature*, where he applies the term to "the difference between the observer and the spectacle—between man and nature"; a difference whereby man becomes aware of the fact that "whilst the world is a spectacle, something in himself is stable."⁷ This also is the distinction above referred to between the soul and nature. The other instance of the use of the word "dualism" occurs in the essay on "Compensation," where it stands as a synonym of "polarity."⁸ Since the word "polarity" appears frequently in Emerson's writings and may be an important clue to his philosophy, I shall discuss its meaning in some detail.

The word is borrowed from the science of physics, where its meaning is well known; but Emerson extends its use to metaphysics and even to ethics. It appears first, I believe, in "The American Scholar" in the following passage:

The great principle of Undulation in nature, that shows itself in the inspiring and expiring of the breath; in desire and satiety; in the ebb and flow of the sea; in day and night; in heat and cold; and, as yet more deeply ingrained in every atom and every fluid, is known to us under the name of Polarity,—these "fits of easy transmission and reflection," as Newton called them, are the law of nature because they are the law of spirit.⁹

In nature, also, appear such opposites as action and reaction, male and female, and the centrifugal and centripetal forces of gravitation. These polarities are to be found, moreover, not only in nature as a whole but also in each part and particle of nature.¹⁰

In making polarity a law of nature because it is a law of spirit, Emerson extends it beyond nature into the realm of being, and so gives to it a metaphysical character. We may expand his statement to mean that spirit is the universal cause, which can be known only by the reason, and nature the particular effect, which can be known

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁸ *Works*, II, 97.

⁷ *Works*, I, 51.

⁹ *Works*, I, 98.

¹⁰ "Compensation," *Works*, II, 96-97.

by the understanding. This interpretation is confirmed by the following application of the law of polarity:

Every act rewards itself, or in other words integrates itself, in a twofold manner; first in the thing, or in real nature; and secondly in the circumstance, or in apparent nature. Men call the circumstance retribution. The causal retribution is in the thing and is seen by the soul. The retribution in the circumstance is seen by the understanding; it is inseparable from the thing, but is often spread over a long time and so does not become distinct until after many years. . . . Cause and effect, means and ends, seed and fruit, cannot be severed; for the effect already blooms in the cause, the end preëxists in the means, the fruit in the seed.¹¹

What he refers to here as "real nature" is the same as what elsewhere he calls soul, spirit, or mind; and what he refers to here as "apparent nature" is what he sometimes calls simply nature, or matter. In the essay on "Fate" he writes: "History is the action and reaction of these two,—Nature and Thought; two boys pushing each other on the curbstone of the pavement. Everything is pusher or pushed; and matter and mind are in perpetual tilt and balance, so."¹² This conflict between mind and matter has produced the universal belief in a good spirit and a wicked spirit who are eternally at war. Emerson does not deny the reality of this conflict, but he sees the conflicting powers as the complementary aspects of a cosmic unity. "Once," he writes, "men thought Spirit divine, and Matter diabolic; one Ormuzd, the other Ahriman. Now science and philosophy recognize the parallelism, the approximation, the unity of the two: how each reflects the other as face answers to face in a glass: nay, how the laws of both are one, or how one is the realization."¹³

This opposition or polarity of mind and matter in cosmic unity is repeated in lesser units throughout the realm of organic life. The higher the organism in the scale of life, the less rigid is the rule of law; in the highest organism, man, matter becomes plastic and is shaped by mind into a likeness of itself. Thus the individual man is a microcosm in which mind and matter, the soul and nature, constitute an organic unity which is, on the level of individuality, identical with the unity of the cosmos. Within the microcosmic individual the law of polarity prevails as elsewhere. This relation of the

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 102-3.

¹² *Works*, VI, 43.

¹³ "The Sovereignty of Ethics," *Works*, X, 213.

individual to the universe is described by Emerson in the following language:

An individual body is the momentary arrest or fixation of certain atoms, which after performing compulsory duty to this enchanted statue, are released again to flow in the currents of the world. An individual mind in like manner is a fixation or momentary eddy in which certain services and powers are taken up and minister in petty niches and localities, and then, being released, return to the unbounded soul of the world.¹⁴

The body of man, therefore, because it is a "fixation of certain atoms," is subject to the law of nature; whereas the mind of man, because it is a fixation of certain powers drawn from the soul of the world, is subject to the law of spirit. An individual man is the fruit of the ages,¹⁵ but he has not yet become the assured master of his environment. The law that established nature and the human race continually thwarts the will of ignorant individuals;¹⁶ for a man is but a fixation of brute atoms until he thinks, and then he uses them as he will.¹⁷ It is not that he escapes the law of nature but that with knowledge he discovers that the law of nature is one with the law of spirit. Man is an infinite soul, and both heaven and earth are passing into his mind; he is aware of an intellect that overhangs his consciousness like a sky,¹⁸ and, if he receives this intellect into himself, he is able to do with knowledge what the stones do by structure under natural law.¹⁹ Intellect is power; it frees man from the limitation of Fate.²⁰ But he must always maintain the mind in a state of freedom or else the iron laws of fate will close upon him again.

The moral sentiment also frees man from the law of nature, or rather it places him in a state of harmony with it. The moral sentiment makes man aware that "the perfect law of duty corresponds with the laws of chemistry, of vegetation, of astronomy, as face to

¹⁴ "Natural History of Intellect," *Works*, XII, 27-28.

¹⁵ "The Method of Nature," *Works*, I, 206.

¹⁶ "Papers from the Dial," *Works*, XII, 408.

¹⁷ "Considerations by the Way," *Works*, VI, 252.

¹⁸ "Natural History of Intellect," *Works*, XI, 17.

¹⁹ "Worship," *Works*, VI, 240.

²⁰ "Fate," *Works*, VI, 27.

face in a glass."²¹ The law which is only a negation and a limitation in nature is made alive in the human mind; it is inspiration.²² The moral sentiment, in short, centers, concentrates us; it "puts us at the heart of Nature, where we belong, in the cabinet of science and of causes, there where all the wires terminate which hold the world in magnetic unity, and so converts us into universal beings."²³ Thus it is that through the intellect and the moral sentiment the individual rises from the lower levels of life, where he was shut in and constrained by the law of nature, which is Fate, into the higher level of life, where he breathes the freedom of Godlike unity and universality. Under the law of polarity, he is

a stupendous antagonism, a dragging together of the poles of the Universe. . . . On one side elemental order, sandstone and granite, rock-ledges, peat-bog, forest, sea and shore; and on the other part thought, the spirit which composes and decomposes nature,—here they are, side by side, god and devil, mind and matter, king and conspirator, belt and spasm, riding peacefully together in the eye and brain of every man.²⁴

In the common possession of this universal spirit all men are made equal. Emerson thinks that the philosophy of the past, which "has laid stress on the distinctions of the individual, and not on the universal attributes of man," is an "impoverishing" philosophy.²⁵ The moral sentiment, he says, equalizes all because it bestows spiritual wealth and power.²⁶ This doctrine of the identity of the individual with the universal in spiritual power means that "what is best in each kind is an index of what should be the average of that thing."²⁷ It was his faith that the moral sentiment would instruct each person in the law of his own nature, which is the universal law, and which has throughout nature a uniform purpose, namely, "to make the best better and the worst good."²⁸ This purpose could not be possible except on the assumption of spiritual equality deriving from the presence of the universal in the individual.

²¹ "Remarks at the Meeting for Organizing the Free Religious Association," *Works*, XI, 479.

²² "Worship," *Works*, VI, 221.

²³ "Literary Ethics," *Works*, I, 162.

²⁴ "Character," *Works*, X, 95.

²⁵ "Worship," *Works*, VI, 234.

²⁶ "Fate," *Works*, VI, 22-23.

²⁷ "Nominalist and Realist," *Works*, III, 244.

²⁸ "Speech at Second Annual Meeting of the Free Religious Association," *Works*, XI, 486.

It is through the individual, of course, that the law of polarity makes itself effective in ethics, the sphere of human relationships. The two poles of matter and spirit, which can be united and harmonized in the individual, draw apart again when one individual has to deal with another or a group. Here there is not that unconscious drawing-together of separate elements by a common law as in objective nature. "As the whole has its law, so each individual has his genius."²⁹ "This determination of Genius in each is so strong," Emerson declares, "that, if it were not guarded with powerful checks, it would have made society impossible. As it is, men are best and most by themselves: and always work in society with great loss of power. They are not timed each to the other: they cannot keep step, and life requires too much compromise."³⁰ Nature provides for the protection of the individual's sacred identity against the will of other individuals to expand and draw him into the circle of their power. But the individual of limited power cannot escape the influence of great men and should not wish to. The spirit of a great man diffuses itself beyond the limits of his personality. He seems to his admirers at first as a complete and original spirit, a cause; but presently, as they grow in understanding, he will be seen in a truer light, as "an exponent of a vaster mind and will." He will be seen as an effect, not a cause, and then his admirers can look through him to the First Cause from which he has drawn his power. And not that only. In seeing him against the background of the universal spirit, we see ourselves in him, and we see that all which he now is we may become, if only we can realize our powers.³¹ The hero whom the youth admires is only a projection of his own soul.³²

This conception of the individual and of the hero involves a kind of aristocracy of character which at first appears to conflict with democratic principles, but the conflict is more apparent than real. Aristocracy, Emerson thinks, is inevitable. If the "excluded majority" revenge themselves on the excluding minority by the strong hand and kill them, at once a new class finds itself at the top, as certainly

²⁹ "Natural History of Intellect," *Works*, XII, 87.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

³¹ "Uses of Great Men," *Works*, IV, 30-35.

³² "Literary Ethics," *Works*, I, 162.

as cream rises in a bowl of milk: and if the people should destroy class after class, until two men only were left, one of these would be the leader and would be involuntarily served and copied by the other."³³ His view is that an aristocracy is justified as long as it depends upon merit. Men of superior qualities become eminent and constitute a standard for emulation. "Men of aim must lead the aimless; men of invention the uninventive. I wish catholic men, who by their science and skill are at home in every latitude and longitude, who carry the world in their thoughts."³⁴ At the conclusion of his essay on "Aristocracy" he describes the type of American man who might be justly called a gentleman or man of honor in a democratic society:

Call it man of honor, or call it Man, the American who would serve his country must learn the beauty and honor of perseverance, he must reinforce himself by the power of character, and revisit the margin of that well from which his fathers drew waters of life and enthusiasm, the fountain I mean of the moral sentiments, the parent fountain from which this goodly Universe flows as a wave.³⁵

For Emerson, then, character, which is grounded in the moral sentiment, rather than intellect qualifies an individual in a democratic society for leadership. The man of character will never use his power for selfish ends but always for the good of the people and with the purpose of assisting them to reach his own moral elevation.

The moral sentiment, functioning as character in individual persons, is the foundation of society. All governments, and democratic governments in particular, have their origin in the moral identity of men.³⁶ The virtues of a community or a state are never greater, and in fact are always less, than the virtues of the citizens who constitute it. "Is not a man better than a town?" Emerson asks.³⁷ He is, of course, because in associating himself with others he subjects himself to the limits of some kind of organization. "Every spirit makes its house," Emerson says, "but afterwards the house confines the spirit."³⁸ It is one of the contradictions of our world that men as a group can advance only by means of institutions, and yet every

³³ "Manners," *Works*, III, 129.

³⁴ "Aristocracy," *Works*, X, 39.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

³⁶ "Politics," *Works*, III, 212.

³⁷ "Self-Reliance," *Works*, II, 89.

³⁸ "Fate," *Works*, VI, 9.

such institution finally becomes an obstacle to further advance. This is the reason Emerson, like many others of his generation, desired as little government as possible. "The appearance of character makes the State unnecessary," he declares. "The wise man is the State."³⁹ The individual who resists the state's encroachment upon his liberty is an antidote to the abuse of government.⁴⁰ The state is the opposite of the individual as nature is the opposite of the soul; they are perpetual antagonists perpetually reconciled and inseparable. They are the two poles of the human community. But the creative power resides in the individual, not in the state; and the individual is, as Emerson has said, best and most when alone. Always the new life is concealed in the bud. "Behind every individual closes organization; before him opens liberty,—the Better, the Best."⁴¹

This propensity of the individual to be forever creating new forms and abandoning the old has been characteristic especially of the frontier, whether physical or mental, in all times and places of human development. "In history," Emerson says, "the great moment is when the savage is just ceasing to be a savage. . . . Everything good in nature and the world is in that moment of transition, when the swarthy juices still flow plentifully from nature, but their astringency or acridity is got out by ethics and humanity."⁴² Such a moment was the age of Pericles in ancient Greece and, in some measure, such was the first half of the nineteenth century in the United States. Emerson limits the period from 1820 to 1840. "There are always two parties," he says, "the party of the Past and the party of the Future; the Establishment and the Movement."⁴³ America was of the party of the future, the party of movement. He was not altogether happy with America as he found it, calling it superficial, a nation of shopkeepers.⁴⁴ But he was not discouraged. "The way to mend the bad world," he declares, "is to create the right world."⁴⁵ He pointed out that in his day America was at the beginning, not

³⁹ "Politics," *Works*, III, 216.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

⁴¹ "Fate," *Works*, VI, 35.

⁴² "Power," *Works*, VI, 70-71.

⁴³ "Life and Letters in New England," *Works*, X, 325.

⁴⁴ "Emancipation in the British West Indies," *Works*, XI, 123.

⁴⁵ "Worship," *Works*, VI, 224.

the meridian, of its development,⁴⁶ and he looked to the future with great expectations. "Here is man in the Garden of Eden; here the Genesis and the Exodus."⁴⁷ It was indeed like setting up a new order of life that might hope to equal in sublimity the geographical setting in which it was placed. Emerson was fully aware of the continued materialism of the American people and their lack of what he termed "male energy,"⁴⁸ by which he meant intellectual and moral power. Yet he realized that "material and moral values are always commensurate" and that "every material organization exists to a moral end, which makes the reason of its existence."⁴⁹

He admitted that he had little esteem for governments. "I set the private man first. He only who is able to stand alone is qualified to be a citizen. . . . This is the theory of the American State, that it exists to execute the will of the citizens, is always responsible to them, and is always to be changed when it does not."⁵⁰ Many are in fact citizens, he realized, who cannot stand alone, but he knew that they would acquire the power to stand alone only if permitted to make the attempt and helped to improve themselves. He was not among those who would limit government merely to a police power. "The tendencies of the times," he writes, "favor the idea of self-government. . . . It promises a recognition of higher rights than those of personal freedom, or the security of property. A man has a right to be employed, to be trusted, to be loved, to be revered."⁵¹ The true patriotism "consists in the delight which springs from contributing our peculiar and legitimate advantages to the benefit of humanity."⁵² The end of political government, he believed, is not democracy—that is the means. Morality is the true end, a state of things which allows every man the largest liberty compatible with the liberty of every other man. He would have government more tender and paternal, "more thoughtful for the interests of women, for the training of children, and for the welfare of sick and unable

⁴⁶ "Politics," *Works*, III, 216-17.

⁴⁷ "Resources," *Works*, VIII, 142.

⁴⁸ "Editors' Address," *Works*, XI, 385.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 386.

⁵⁰ "Speech on Affairs in Kansas," *Works*, XI, 258.

⁵¹ "Politics," *Works*, III, 219.

⁵² "Editors' Address," *Works*, 387.

persons, and serious care of criminals, than was ever any the best government of the Old World."⁵³ Nor must America be content to live to herself and care only for her own. He wished to see America "a benefactor such as no country ever was, hospitable to all nations, legislating for all nationalities."⁵⁴ One might suppose these words to have been uttered in 1941 instead of 1863, they apply so aptly to present conditions at home and abroad.

Earlier in this paper I referred to the fact that Jonathan Edwards and Benjamin Franklin are often cited as representatives of the two sides of the typical American character. Edwards was an idealist who hoped for the perfection of the individual by spiritual improvement. Franklin was a pragmatist who hoped for the perfection of society by material improvement. This categorical distinction is unfair to both men because it makes them appear more narrow than they were, but it serves to illustrate the two-sidedness of the American national character. The ideal and the practical are polar opposites, like mind and matter; both are present and necessary in the temperament of every individual, although usually one predominates.⁵⁵ Emerson had more of the idealism of Edwards than of the practicality of Franklin, but he was by no means impractical; and the purpose of his life was to popularize a philosophy which might make these two qualities combine harmoniously in the individual and in society.

As Emerson conceived it, idealism included and provided for pragmatism somewhat in the same manner as his concept of the soul included and provided for nature. Speaking to the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Cambridge in 1867, he said:

We wish to put the ideal rules into practice, to offer liberty instead of chains, and see whether liberty will not disclose its proper checks; believing that a free press will prove safer than the censorship; to ordain free trade, and believe that it will not bankrupt us; universal suffrage, believing that it will not carry us to mobs, or back to kings again. I believe the checks are as sure as the springs.⁵⁶

He believed that ideals can be put to practical use but that they cannot be made to go beyond the people who use them. The state,

⁵³ "The Fortune of the Republic," *Works*, XI, 540-41.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 531.

⁵⁵ "Natural History of Intellect," *Works*, XII, 61.

⁵⁶ "Progress of Culture," *Works*, VIII, 231.

as well as the individual, rests on an ideal basis,⁵⁷ but it is the individual who builds the state. "We surround ourselves always, according to our freedom and ability," he says, "with true images of ourselves in things."⁵⁸ The state is a composite image of all its citizens, and if the reformer would improve the state he must begin with the individuals who compose it. Since, in Emerson's faith, there is no limit to man's power to improve himself, there is likewise no limit to his power to improve the world in which he lives.

In this period of world-wide violence and spiritual decay, Emerson's strong affirmation of faith in human nature is a valuable tonic. His emphasis upon the moral sentiment, moreover, should act as a check upon man's tendency, now growing dangerously, to settle all problems by resort to physical force. Emerson is the more valuable as a counselor in these matters because he understood the whole nature of man, the physical side as well as the spiritual side. He is not a dreamer who would wish away the terrible forces of nature but a practical philosopher who would show us how to use them wisely. He will not permit us to forget the supreme importance of character in the final disposition of human problems, and that is his indispensable value today for America.

OUR UGLY CONTEMPORARIES

L. H. STIMMEL¹

If there is nothing else in which the modern American fiction writer excels, it is hard to deny him the distinction of introducing into his stories more ugliness, in quantity and probably in degree, than has any predecessor. Wolfe delighted in it; Faulkner, say some, grovels in it; Steinbeck would be a hack without it. Certain fiction magazines seem to consider repulsiveness the prime aesthetic virtue; and even the once squeamish women's periodicals and the novels written for the lady reader are highly colored with what a more thin-skinned generation would—and did—call ugliness.

⁵⁷ "Editors' Address," *Works*, XI, 390.

⁵⁸ "War," *Works*, XI, 165.

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The writer recalls with a particular shudder one magazine story in which two children, of about the right age for playing "horsie," pounded a tired, broken-spirited "daddy" with such animal brutality that they soon found their "horsie" dead; and at the discovery they displayed only disgust. Here is ugliness of a subtle sort, yet vigorously repulsive. No less so, to select further examples, are the whole atmosphere in which Bigger Thomas walks, Pilar's description of the way in which the Communists destroyed the town they had captured (in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*), and the whole gruesome narrative of Mari Sandoz' female Hitler in *Slogum House*—which the author, consistent with her generation, considers her best book.

This predilection for the repellent is not necessarily an objection to current literature or a compliment to it. But it does reopen an interesting and possibly significant problem in appreciation: Is what is ugly in itself ever indispensable in art? If the purpose of creative art or writing is to produce something beautiful and uplifting, then an unmitigatedly ugly picture or phrase is an artistic flaw. It is, of course, not impossible that squalor, rape, incest, and deformity may become a part of something beautiful or even have a touch of beauty; the gods of beauty have recently acquired pinkish tendencies. But it is still debatable whether our generation of naturalists, merely because it is a bold generation, can gain lasting aesthetic approval of scenes and words that once were called obscene and revolting.

The ugly, as it is used here, means the repulsive, the distorted, the nauseating, the disgusting: that which only the most calloused reader can, in the slang sense, "take." As a literary device it has not really established itself in accepted masterpieces; the modern Americans are attempting to do what the giants of literary history could not achieve. Its primary employment before this century has come in horror stories, on or below the level of Victor Hugo and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. In comedy it has been important as the grotesque; but even this does not occur in its most striking form in the best examples of the art. True, Aristophanes' Bacchus in *The Frogs* and the gory casualness of several of W. S. Gilbert's *Bab Ballads*—

A feeling of disgust upon her senses there will fall
When she looks upon his body chopped particularly small—

are ugly spots in the works of great humorists. But, with the possible exception of Rabelais, no comic-writer has ever won immortality by sheer ugliness.

Whatever of this element the literary titans employed usually pictorialized the supernatural, especially the evil. Dante's various hells, Milton's picture of Sin and Death at the gates of hell, and Spenser's descriptions of the Cave of Error are a few samples. On the border of this same type of use are Beowulf's fight with the mother of Grendel, in which he tears out her arm, and Christian's struggle with Apollyon. The reader can undoubtedly think of other examples. Ugliness thus used seeks to intensify either the awfulness of evil or the heroism of the protagonist. More often than not it is unconvincing—as when Shakespeare describes the courage of Antony by telling what he drank. Even when it is effective, as it can be considered to be in Swift's *Modest Proposal*, the emotion which it calls forth from the reader is hardly a glow of spiritual uplift.

Critical theory, too, is against too much ugliness, though in more recent times it has opened its mind somewhat. In the history of aesthetics there are three traditional attitudes, roughly representing the right, the middle, and the left. On the right is Lessing, who rejects the ugly completely for the static arts. "Who would paint you," he said, "if no one would look at you?" About poetry he is less dogmatic; for poetry, having movement, may have repellent sections which could fit into and not ruin a beautiful whole; but if the repulsive is used to produce sympathy (a higher aesthetic value than fear), it must be softened—perhaps as Hollywood softened *The Grapes of Wrath* by the omission of the most offensive details. With Lessing is Ruskin, who insisted upon a moral justification for all art. Ruskin grudgingly and rather vaguely admitted that the ugly might be necessary "to complete the picture" but would not concede that it could ever be a part of beauty.

Similar attitudes were taken by Hegel, who insisted that the ugly should always be softened, especially cowardice, meanness, and envy in human character (which, he commented in pre-naturalism naïveté, should never be given a place in art and literature); by Weisse, who allowed the ugly in art only as glorified or comic; by Rosenkrantz, who again would accept the Greek dogma that art must be softened

to conform to the rules of beauty; and even by Aristotle, who, in spite of his elastic interpretation of art as imitation, would limit the genuinely ugly to comedy.

In the middle are such critics as Hartmann and the mystic Plotinus, who would use the ugly as a foil by which we can appreciate the truly beautiful. More liberally, Goethe, Burke, Bosanquet, and the post-Hegelian school consider it the aim of art to reproduce the significant, the ideal, or the sublime; and from this, ugliness cannot always be eliminated. Burke suggests that ugliness contributes to the highest aesthetic reaction—that induced by the sublime. Bosanquet takes an even more liberal view—that the ugly and the beautiful permeate each other, and beauty expands its limits to include what we once thought was ugly.

There is no indorsement here, it must be noted, of extreme naturalism. Bosanquet, “pinkest” among the established critics, would have allowed such ugliness as might have a touch of beauty in it—as, for example, Rose o’Sharon’s offering her breast to the starving boy in the last scene of *The Grapes of Wrath*; but it would be difficult to contend that much of the sordidness of contemporary naturalism has such beauty.

The only school of critics which would allow the naturalists to indulge in their extremes is that represented by Croce. To him the aim of creative work is imitation, reproduction, or expression of the idea or mood dominant in the creator’s mind. If that idea is ugly, what of it? It needs only accurate expression to be good art; it is ugly in the aesthetic sense only if it is poor expression. By this criterion it would be hard to find an uglier piece of literature than a Lloyd Douglas novel—which, ironically, is dedicated to the goodness of man and the beauty of all that is life.

To some extent our modern reader may accept Croce’s point of view. Our frame of mind is a calloused one; our readers tend to become so accustomed to the ugly that it loses its repulsiveness and thus its entity. But the mere contemporary popularity of this attitude does not necessarily establish its ultimate truth. The critical theory of any age is likely to adopt the principles which the contemporary pioneering creators exemplify, for criticism is necessarily *a posteriori*.

In short, it is still possible to condemn Hemingway and Steinbeck for unnecessary ugliness. Many intelligent readers do. And unless the dirt and ugliness of the lives they present are a part of the beauty, the sublimity, of the whole, the objectors have a case. The mere fact that a naturalist chooses to confer the dignity of print upon certain monosyllables which he remembers from his boyhood does not make those monosyllables sublime.

Socially, *The Grapes of Wrath* is unchallengeable; indeed, it is a great work. It is intended to show how the other half exists, and it achieves its purpose. Artistically, is it justified? It is life. But is it art?

The ghosts of most bygone authors and critics would condemn it and the literature which it typifies. Even the very liberal like their ugliness seasoned with a pinch of beauty. But the ugly in the twentieth century has not beauty but sheer power as its objective. Rarely is it uplifting; seldom indeed is it softened, for the whole purpose and theory of Steinbeck eliminate such namby-pamby tactics as Hegel advocated. For such intellectual anesthetics realism has only contempt.

Why? It is possible to dodge the question and still be logical. Ugliness is a fashion, and who can explain fashions? Ugly books—like ugly hats—sell; what more can be demanded of them?

But if we do try to provide an answer, we may find it necessary to choose from several possibilities. One is that, as has been suggested before, we are bolder than we used to be; our reaction from the Victorian era, where there were no such things as legs, gives us delight of a private, surreptitious sort when we read something unpleasant. Perhaps this is especially true of the women readers, who have replaced the "lady" readers of a generation or so ago. Another possibility is that what Mr. Krutch called the modern temper—the cynical, disillusioned mind that distrusts all beautiful pretenses—has put its taboo on anything that does not have its decent share of the repulsive. Or perhaps ours is a generation that has nothing to offer that is positive; as Hardy's "Drinking Song" suggests, we are running out of great thoughts.

But these suggestions are negative; they are based upon the premise that our moderns have little to say. Perhaps the premise is wrong; perhaps they do have a message, which is the rumbling of the dis-

tant drum. For when they are at their best—and we are excluding the cheap imitations—they are suggesting, with their ugliness, that things are not right. *The Grapes of Wrath* is a troublemaker; it is disturbing, revolutionary. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is a picture of a revolution. And the rest of our ugly literature is fairly effective in showing things that should not be tolerated because they are not right. This does not imply communistic revolution. It is merely an armchair indictment of a society in which only a few—the harmless intellectuals—are aware of the correctable ills of society and timidly asking that they be corrected.

If we assume—as we do with considerable hesitation—that this last is the real reason for ugliness in modern American fiction, then we recognize a contempt for the *ars gratia artis* theory. Art for art's sake be hanged; why speak of art when there is so much to be said for humanity?

No one knows what another generation will say to all this. It may never read an American novel of the 1930's. And, on the other hand, it may settle for us the puzzling question: Is that novel no good because it is too ugly, or are the standards that would say so no good because they are too rigid? Or have all our standards slipped to a point from which a return is difficult and highly improbable for many generations to come?

ON THE PLACE OF THE STUDY OF LITERATURE IN A PROGRESSIVE COLLEGE¹

HENRY W. SIMON²

Had you been at Harvard—then distinctly a progressive college—a hundred and twenty-five years ago, the only literature you would have been bothered with was classical literature, that is, classes in grammatical and perhaps philological analysis of Greek and Latin texts with the sort of halting translation you used to make in high-school Caesar, Cicero, and Virgil. If you had been an unusually

¹ Address delivered before the faculty and students of Bennington College, Bennington, Vt., September 19, 1939.

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daring undergraduate, you might have sneaked in—for reading in bed at night—some “modern” literature, such as the plays of Shakespeare, which were considered improper reading for young folks by many “right-minded” people. Addison and the sermons of Tillotson might have been considered acceptable light reading by your tutors, but even you, as a decent undergraduate—possibly a candidate for the ministry—would not have blemished your self-respect by turning the pages of the scandalous work of the wicked Lord Byron or even slandered a valuable hour with the lighthearted romantic nonsense of the anonymous author of *Waverley*, Sir Walter Scott. I am speaking, of course, of your outside reading. The faculty would never have dreamed of mentioning any of these dreadful miscreations of literature unless it were to thunder, in a Sunday sermon, against the evil practice, rapidly assuming the proportions of a fad, of subscribing to a new edition of Shakespeare. It had hit Harvard in 1807; and though it was not regarded so dangerous as a fad of smoking marijuana might be regarded today, it was definitely worse than swallowing live goldfish—and it had spread to Dartmouth.

Twenty-five years later—about a hundred years ago, that is—literature had attained a little more respectability. Not that books were read in classes—that did not happen for a long time to come—but at least it was not only fashionable but quite allowable to discuss literature as an extra-curricular activity. Though the so-called “literary societies” discussed chiefly politics—often in formal debate as a sort of political training analogous to the Oxford Union that trains England’s Edens—literary subjects often came up, and the societies maintained their own libraries, sometimes better in the literature division than the college libraries were. Colleges appointed professors of belles-lettres, who lectured seldom and then on either aesthetic theory or the history of literature. They never bothered the students to read books. The attitude toward reading literature was summarized by a committee of the Yale faculty in 1835 which reported that the best way to “understand the true speech and genius of English literature” was to study Latin and Greek and that Spanish, Italian, and French were “too easy and too useless to acquire.”

Harvard—still a progressive college—actually offered some instruction in modern languages, and exactly a hundred years ago

appointed to the chair of belles-lettres a rising young poet named Henry W. Longfellow, who condescended to read Dante with the handful of undergraduates learned enough in Italian to struggle through some of it. He even told them something about Scandinavian and Icelandic literature. Sixteen years later he was succeeded by another rising poet named James Russell Lowell, who also picked a few students and read Dante with them. But it appears to have been a rather effete business: a handful of young aesthetes read the *Divine Comedy* with a pair of peculiarly gifted young professors; and when the peculiarly gifted young professors left to become the author of "Hiawatha" and the minister to Spain, respectively, it all stopped. No disrespect, of course, is intended to the work of these poets as teachers. The memoirs of one or two of their students speak glowingly of the classes, and the most distinguished of them later became president of Harvard and lent his name to the five-foot shelf. But Longfellow and Lowell left no appreciable effect on the study of literature because they concerned themselves only with what might be termed the "dessert" of such study: they were not concerned with developing literary understanding with the ordinary student; their work was esoteric. They had, strictly speaking, no successors. Since their time, it is true, there have been a number of poets on the Harvard faculty; but they have been either, like T. S. Eliot and Robert Frost, temporary ornaments or, like George Santayana and Robert Hillyer, poets incidentally, and on the faculty because they gave competent instruction in the main stream of the curriculum.

It remained for Francis James Child, a younger colleague of Professors Longfellow and Lowell, to be most influential in establishing literary study in American colleges and to set the essential pattern that is still dominating that study in all but the more progressive institutions. At that time—about seventy-five years ago—it was a bold, progressive step; and he made his most spectacular advance not at Harvard, which was now becoming somewhat more staid and dignified, but in what has been probably the most important progressive institution of higher education in our recent history—Johns Hopkins. Here his courses in Chaucer, the ballads, and Shakespeare attracted almost two hundred students. Slowly other universities fell into line.

Child's influence was great, partly because he was a great teacher, partly because he was a scholar of the first rank, as Longfellow and Lowell were not. (I think it was also partly because he was a thoroughly human being with interests as intense and almost as active in politics, music, and gardening as in literature. But that is not quite the point here.) It is the influence of Child and others like him that has made the study of literature what it is in American colleges. Once he was a brilliant progressive. Now his pattern is one the conservatives follow and the progressives react against. It will be worth while to examine that pattern briefly, for it was, in its day, the progressive pattern that resulted from reaction against a still more conservative one, just as today's more progressive patterns, as they slowly take shape, are reactions against Child's.

The respectable literature to study even as late as the 1870's, when Child was doing his work, was still classical literature. It had been intrenched in America since Harvard was founded in 1636 and in Europe since long before the Middle Ages. If any case was to be made for the study of modern literature, it had to be shown to be as respectable and as difficult as Latin and Greek. The difficulty was established with a vengeance some eighty years ago, and graduate students are still paying for it even to the fourth generation. Philology was the whalebone corset in which literary study was made stiff, respectable, and unattractive to anyone but a professor. To illustrate what philological study of English literature means, I shall merely quote the questions asked by Professor March of Lafayette College on the first word in *Julius Caesar*. The word is "hence," and the questions run like this:

What is the first clause? What ellipsis? What kind of a clause—declarative, interrogative, imperative, exclamatory or optative? What is the verb? Subject? What does *hence* combine with? Kind of combination? Does it complete or extend the predicate? Is it an adjunct of time, place, mode or cause? What language is it from? Which is the root letter? Why called a pronominal element? What other words in English of the same pronominal element—pronouns? Adverbs? Of what case does *-ce* represent the ending? How was this genitive written in Anglo-Saxon? Was *hence* ever written *hennes*, *hens*? What relation of place is expressed by the genitive termination? What grammatical equivalent for *hence*? Rule for point after *hence*? Rule for its capital?

I am perhaps not doing complete justice to Professor March, but this unfortunate trend toward "respectability" gained such ground

that undergraduates in introductory courses in literature were not asked to read such attractive stuff as appears on the lists of the National Council of Teachers of English today but studied—at Columbia, for instance—texts with these titles: *Parser and Analyzer for Beginners*, *Anglo-Saxon Grammar*, *Introduction to Anglo-Saxon*, and *Anglo-Saxon Reader*. Even at that it appears to have been more attractive than analogous study of the classical tongues, for English literature gained rapidly in its struggle with Latin and Greek.

The other instrument used to make modern literature respectable was history. If English literature could be proved to have as long and complicated a history as the classical languages have, it would become more academically respectable still. Well, English literature does have as long and complicated a history, and it is becoming longer and more complicated every minute, if not more respectable. So, side by side with texts on Anglo-Saxon, your grandparents, if they went to college, were asked to memorize dates and names. Nobody was asked to read the works of literature themselves, but just handbooks about them. Literature came to be, to quote Brander Matthews, an arid region abounding in dates.

These—language and history—are the two aspects of literary study still predominant in our most conservative and influential graduate schools—Harvard, Columbia, and Yale. These institutions, and others all over the country modeled after them, continue to turn out the Ph.D's who become department heads and determine what undergraduates ought to study in elementary literature courses. If you want to know what the grinding process is like, read a recent novel called *Doctor's Oral*, where it is described in all its idiotic psychopathy.

I do not wish to minimize the importance of the history of our language and its literature. But it is important for only the specialist to know these well, not for the general undergraduate student in literature. Yet it is these aspects of the study—and especially the latter—that have long dominated literature study in American colleges, and, as some of you will recall from your high-school days, even in secondary schools. Now there is a reaction going on again, this time chiefly in the name of progressive education. This time the reaction, which is not really very new, is wildly confused. The direction in which it is going is not nearly so clear as it was when the

study of literature was fighting for a place in the curriculum. In 1927 Professor Charles S. Pendleton of Peabody College, Nashville, asked a large number of teachers why they were teaching English and got no less than 1,581 different answers. Yet I think that we can trace some of the influences that are making this confusion and that are determining the shape in which literary study in colleges—particularly progressive colleges—is coming out.

The first of these confusing influences is just a reaction against the old, staid forms. Any reasonably intelligent person could see that the traditional history of English literature survey course as it was usually taught was a pretty dead thing for live American undergraduates of the twentieth century. They therefore looked around for something else to put in its place. Some put in the study of a few selected authors, some put in comparative literature, some organized courses about "types" of literature. Many of them are doubtless very good—at least on paper; but then the old survey of English literature doesn't look so bad on paper either.

A second influence making for confusion was the rise in importance of the social sciences in the eyes of modern educators and students. Especially since 1929, everyone has become more "socially conscious," as it is called; and educators, critics, and students are all demanding more and more social theory and interpretation in literature. In some colleges there are more social science majors than English majors—an unheard-of situation twenty years ago. Literature, once the most popular of subjects for study, is slowly being put into the position that Latin and Greek were in when they fought a losing battle for pre-eminence seventy-five years ago. The classics were put into that position partly because they were losing all practical usefulness, partly because they were taught as dead subjects. In today's struggle some English departments are offering courses with such titles as "Literature of Social Change" and "Western Culture and the Orient"—to quote the catalogue of Columbia University. Again, some of these courses are very good, for when you get a good man teaching a course it does not make much difference what you call it.

A third confusing influence is that of the "correlators" in education—that is, those who want to fuse as many subjects as they can

into one course. Some forty-odd colleges, ranging from the rather progressive University of Arizona to the militantly antiprogressive University of Chicago, substitute for introductory literature something they call "the humanities"—that is, the literature of all languages, philosophy, music, and the arts. Once more, most of these courses look good on paper; but at their worst they try to cover so much that they afford only a nodding acquaintanceship with great art, and at their best they serve as a history of culture.

A fourth influence, probably not so important as the other three, is that exerted by the teachers who react from these various theories and, with a sort of impatient shrug of the shoulders, pursue what might be called an isolationist policy. There are probably—and understandably—a great many of these individuals; but, as they all tend to retire into their own individual holes and teach vigorously their own pet theory of aesthetics, Freudian psychology, or what not, they do not have a great effect unless it is to make the picture still more complicated. Probably many of the most brilliant teachers come into this category.

Now you will see that the purposes in the study of literature have arisen in the past and often in the present from matters that have very little to do with literature—from the struggle for dominance with Greek and Latin, from a later struggle with the social sciences, from some educational theory about the construction of the curriculum. It would seem to me profitable to try to evolve a theory of the place of literature in the curriculum of a progressive college from the nature of literature itself. This is a complex philosophical problem that obviously cannot be solved in one hour by one man—least of all, myself. Still, I should like to make a gesture toward a beginning. This I should like to do in the form of a series of propositions each of which, I suppose, could be argued at considerable length and with considerable tedium. I promise to be brief—and incomplete:

1. Literature is an art. It presents its problems in aesthetics, in form and techniques. Yet it is not so purely an art as music is. The relative stress on content—verbalized content—in literature is far greater than in music, granted one is willing to admit that form and content can in any way be separated. What I mean is that Spender's attitude toward Viennese socialism and Milton's attitude toward

God are much more important in a discussion of their works than is Beethoven's attitude toward Napoleon in a discussion of the *Eroica Symphony*. Therefore, while literature is certainly an art, to study it purely as art form is foolish—if not impossible.

2. Literature is a branch of social science. Perhaps I have stated this backward and should say instead, "Social science is a branch of literature." I heard an argument fifteen years ago between Parker T. Moon, professor of history, and John Erskine, professor of literature. Dr. Moon showed rather conclusively that literature is one of the types of evidence that historians must use to give the picture of an age and that that is the chief reason for studying it. "On the contrary," said Dr. Erskine; "after all, what is history but an inferior form of fiction?" Both gentlemen, I think, were right, but only partially right. The point is that while each study may be regarded as a branch of the other, it is a mistake to study it exclusively in this fashion. Professor Robert Brooks of Williams gives his students a large number of novels to read for his course in labor problems, but he would be the last to claim that this constitutes a competent course in literature. Yet this is the principle on which some progressive institutions build their curriculum around social science as what they call the "core subject." The threat from misunderstood social science is the most serious one to a competent study of literature; and the educationalists who are foisting such theories on the schools and colleges are aided not by the writings of Karl Marx but by a number of half-baked Marxian critics. They are the sort of educationalists and critics who consider *The Grapes of Wrath* a great novel and *Wuthering Heights* a good vehicle for Merle Oberon; whereas the truth of the matter is—I think—that *The Grapes of Wrath* is an important document in social history, like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and, also like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a not-very-good novel. *Wuthering Heights*, on the other hand, is a very great novel and of very obscure importance as social history. (It is also, incidentally, a very dull motion picture that almost completely misses the novel's literary values.)

3. Literature is partly psychology. This, on the face of it, is obvious. A number of years ago, when Freud was still fashionably shocking and Havelock Ellis not mentioned above a breath in polite society, some rather silly things were done in the name of psycho-

analysis; but, on the whole, psychology, particularly psychoanalytical concepts, has become so powerful an aid to literary understanding that a modern study of books is pretty certain to look to psychology for aid.

4. Literature is partly philosophy—"amateur philosophy," Professor Raymond Weaver has called it. This means that it is not technical philosophy that inquires into such things as the nature of knowledge but philosophy in the elementary dictionary sense—"that knowledge of which all other knowledges are a branch"—and also in the popular sense of the word as it is used in the phrase "philosophy of life." Literature is philosophical chiefly in the sense that it deals with values—human, moral values as opposed to the values of science, which are chiefly measurable values. The student of literature, provided he is a broad student who considers all its values, must inevitably be profoundly affected by this study. You will recognize the truth of this fact by considering your acquaintances: the man who is at home in the world of books is marked by that fact, and he is different from the man who is not at home in that world and different, too, from one who reads books for one thing only—their form, their social implications, their psychological revelations, their philological problems, or their place in the history of literature. The man who is at home in books in the broader sense has had his values and his way of looking at life profoundly affected by intimate contact with the finest minds and spirits that have written.

If my general account of what literature is—partly a fine art, partly social science, partly psychology, partly philosophy, religion, and ethics and yet not one of these wholly—is sound, then certain corollaries follow. To understand literature and literary values one must develop aesthetic sensibilities, that is, develop an ear for rhythms of poetry and prose, a feeling for form, a sensitivity to the overtones of meaning in a vocabulary, etc. One must understand something of the world we live in, especially social relationships and the construction of society; one must understand something of the individuals who live in it and their psychological make-up; and one must have a developing sense of values. Any one of these fields—art, social studies, psychology, and philosophy—may

to a greater or less extent be studied and its techniques mastered without much relationship to the others. This is a point that may be vigorously disputed. Those who disagree may say that a sociological survey of a community, for example, would be incomplete and not make much sense if it did not take into consideration the art the community produces as well as the products of industry; they may say that it would have to employ social psychology for a reasonable interpretation and that it would, whether it wished to or not and no matter how scientific and impartial it tried to be, imply some sort of social philosophy. It is true that areas of human study—even the physical sciences—can never be wholly watertight; and in a progressive college they are likely to become sterile if they are so regarded. Yet it is the nature of each of the fields other than literature to start from the point of view of its own concepts and techniques and to subordinate the others, making use of them only when it is necessary. Especially is this so at the beginning stages. The social implications of a painting, the philosophical implications of a scientific discovery, usually come late in the artistic and scientific training of a student, if at all.

With literature, the opposite is true—again, if my description of that study is at all correct. If literature is made up of important implications in the other fields, they must in some way necessarily enter the study. A study of Shakespeare or Joyce is all but unthinkable without psychological considerations, let alone the others; a study of Chaucer or Dickens is all but unthinkable without the social considerations, let alone the artistic, psychological, and philosophical.

Please do not think I am suggesting that the study of literature provides competent training in these other fields. Patently it cannot—could not even if we could find the omniscient professor who himself is a competent scholar in all of them. Yet literature, by its nature, is a study of the relationship between all of them. Social principles, for example, enter the study of a book in much the same way they do the life of a human being. They enter in terms of a specific set of characters, specific psychological, philosophical, and artistic situations. They cannot—or at least I think they should not—be abstracted from the book and studied by themselves as they might in a text on economics or sociology. They are inextricably

interwoven, studied not from the point of view of themselves but from the point of view of the book with all its many other implications.

Nor do I want to suggest—as might be concluded from this argument—that literature and life are the same things, as superficial critics sometimes tell us. They aren't. If literature holds the mirror to nature, it does it only—to make the quotation slightly more accurate—"as 'twere," that is, literature makes an artistic pattern of the hodgepodge of value and accident which constitutes any segment of life. Life is the subject of literature, but, like painting, literature does not present a photograph. Like any other art, literature is based on selection and arrangement, the elements being chiefly artistic, social, psychological, and philosophical. Bad literature distorts these elements; good literature brings them into a pattern that is meaningful. A broad study of literature must consider all the elements; and a book cannot be said to be satisfactorily understood if the relationship which constitutes its pattern is not fairly clear.

This generalization about the study of literature holds true, I believe, particularly in the more elementary stages of the study. Later on, when a student specializes, let us say, in the philosophical assumptions of Dante or the dramaturgy of Marlowe, one particular aspect becomes predominant, and relationships are of less importance. There may be danger here of overspecialization, of a scholarship that becomes sterile, but not if the elementary study has been broad enough. In the elementary stages the student should have developed an appreciation of what literary study is, an understanding of the relationships which exist between the multifarious parts of his whole studies and of his own life.

Before drawing some obvious conclusions, I should like briefly to summarize the argument up to this point.

1. Literature in the past and largely in the present has been studied in colleges for reasons and in ways that are not based essentially on the nature of literature but either for totally extraneous reasons (such as analogy with the study of classical languages) or in narrowly literary ways (such as those dictated by graduate schools for advanced study).

2. Literature is composed of elements that are found in other

fields of study, particularly art, social science, psychology, and philosophy.

3. On account of the nature of literature, its study involves all these fields *from the very beginning*. A study of literature is largely a study of their relationships, for they form the matrix of a book much as they form the matrix of life itself.

Now we come to the obvious conclusions on the place of literature in a progressive college. A distinguishing feature of a progressive college—perhaps the most distinguishing feature—is that it attempts to develop its students toward maturity intellectually, emotionally, morally, and physically. It does not, like the anti-progressive college, regard its students as so many pure intelligences, of whatever caliber. There should, then, in the progressive college, be some agency that suggests patterns of values and interrelationships to the students, that gives them a way to see in perspective those facts, principles, and skills in which they are trained.

I suggest, therefore, that the obvious agency is the introductory course in literature. I suggest, further, that the exact list of books studied does not make much difference so long as they are good books and so long as they are studied in a broad way and not from the point of view of a narrow specialist. I suggest that if any one subject is by its nature a "core" subject, that subject is literature. And I suggest, finally, that every student in a progressive college ought to take a broad introductory course in literature, but whether he does it in his first or his last year does not make too much difference.

THE CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY IN A SURVEY COURSE IN THE HUMANITIES

SAMUEL WEINGARTEN¹

It is not necessary to review at length the evidence showing that democracy is in a critical position today: the aggressiveness of the leaders of the totalitarian states in diffusing their philosophy by all the devices that technology and advertising have made available, the discrediting of democracy as decadent and inefficient, the corroding influences within. Nor is it necessary to review extensively indications of the wave of national consciousness that has swept over our country. On all sides we have evidence of a stirring and an awakening to the meaning and values of democracy. Daily, weekly, monthly publications show "democracy at bay," define for us "the ramparts we defend," and enumerate democratic principles of government and contrast them with those of the totalitarian states. Songs aim to stir us to love our country; pageants and dramas aim to make our history vivid to us. From many quarters we are urged to clarify for ourselves the meaning of democracy, to formulate its basic positions, to know what we are fighting for if fighting becomes necessary. Numerous agencies are being employed to accomplish this clarification; instructors in the field of the humanities may well ask themselves what they are contributing.

Few educators will deny that the study of history should be much more than mere antiquarianism. It is generally agreed that the study of history is justified by the light which it throws on the present either in strengthening belief in ideals and institutions through an understanding of the human needs and historical exigencies that brought them into existence or in enabling us better to control the course of the future. In a report of the Commission on the Social Studies of the American Historical Association, L. C. Marshall and

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R. M. Goetz state their belief that by the end of general education (which many educators believe should be at the end of the junior college course) "the pupil should have an operative understanding of the significant eras and striking events in the development of culture."² To create such an understanding, they recommend at some appropriate level of the educational ladder "a formal course in the history of culture, sweeping the whole field of its origins, its development, its role in human living, its continuity, its vehicles of change, and the instrumentalities requisite to its control." In many institutions such a survey of cultural history is given under the sponsorship of the department of the social sciences. In the Chicago city junior colleges the survey course in the social sciences is not such a course; it concerns itself with present-day social problems—perhaps justifiably so. Although many history courses are offered in our curriculum, a student may spend two years in our colleges without electing a single history course. If it is assumed that an understanding of the past is acquired by students in the secondary schools, we have failed to find this true; at least, we have not found an "operative understanding" in them. We have considered it necessary to give them this understanding through the survey course in the humanities, which all our students are required to take in their sophomore year.

This course is historical in that it presents the major epochs of Western cultural history in chronological order: ancient, medieval, Renaissance, modern, and contemporary. It has a narrative thread in its presentation of Western culture from ancient Egypt to twentieth-century America as this occurred in its natural unfolding. It also may be said to be historical in the more usual sense because for each epoch a frame of reference of material culture—social, political, scientific—is created by a series of lectures and readings on such topics as "Social and Political Patterns of the Middle Ages" and "Historic and Scientific Settings of the Modern Age." We consider an understanding of material culture prerequisite to the complete understanding of the thought and the expression in art and literature of an age.

In the study of each of the epochs we focus attention on the forms and techniques by which men have given expression to their intellec-

² *Curriculum-making in the Social Studies* (New York: Scribner's, 1936), p. 197.

tual and emotional reactions to life and the universe—the Greek ode, the Renaissance sonnet, the Gothic spire, the sonata, abstract painting. But the greater emphasis is on the ideas which have come into the stream of Western thought, ideas current in each age and popularly expressed in its literature and art or the individual contributions of philosophers, religious teachers, writers, and artists. The history of ideas is an important, perhaps the most important, phase of our survey course in the humanities.

The fact that our study of ideas follows a chronological development enables us better to interpret them within each epoch as it is related to its preceding and following epochs. The present comes then to be understood as an outgrowth of a continuous development through the past. Intellectual history, existing as a fundamental basis of our course, throws light on concepts as they exist today by giving us their roots in the past; the framework of material culture gives us the soil in which these roots grew. This type of history was strongly advocated by James Harvey Robinson as a means for producing such objectivity of thinking in the sciences of man as already exists in the natural sciences. This, he believed, may result from the study of "the origin of many of our current beliefs." Professor J. H. Randall's *The Making of the Modern Mind* is an application of Robinson's method by a philosopher. "If men's minds," Randall writes, "are a mosaic or a palimpsest of belief upon belief, it is of highest importance that they understand the life-history of those beliefs, why they are there, and whether they are justified in being there or should be discarded."

An effort is being made at present in this country to clarify the meaning of the concept of democracy and to strengthen faith in it. Both, we believe, can be accomplished to a large degree by the study of the life-history of the concept. If a practical program of democracy is to be worked out, the basic principles of democracy must be understood as a guide in action. An examination of the survey course in the humanities in the Chicago city junior colleges will show that a life-history of the concept of democracy is presented and that its philosophic bases are revealed through a presentation of the humanistic-democratic tradition.

Early in the course two wars are considered; these are of interest

to us in the study of the humanities, not as military or political events, but because the issues involved were important in the development of Western culture. Having noted, on the one hand, the intellectual uniformitarianism and the intolerance of the authoritarian, totalitarian empires of the ancient Near East and, on the other hand, the birth of intellectual freedom and unbridled investigation among the early Greek philosophers, the student realizes what a tremendous difference it would have made in Western man's development had the Greeks been defeated in their conflict with the Persians. The readings from Herodotus' description of Marathon and Thermopylae are exciting to him because the stakes are so high—here is a struggle for the intellectual independence of the individual, without which Plato and Aristotle, the founders of intellectual speculation in the Western world, would have been impossible! If he has been following the Battle of Britain and understands the basic issues, he realizes how strikingly similar are the issues of the past and the present conflict. Similarly, he can view the Peloponnesian War as a conflict between two contrasting ideals: Athens with its culture and emphasis on individual enrichment versus Sparta, the militarized, disciplined city-state, submerging the individual in the group. He realizes how far back in the history of Western man are the roots of our democratic emphasis on freedom of thought and discussion when he reads the words which Thucydides attributes to Pericles: "We Athenians . . . instead of looking on discussion as a stumbling block in the way of action . . . think it an indispensable preliminary to any wise action at all." He finds a striking resemblance to the utterances of Abraham Lincoln and Franklin D. Roosevelt in the words of Pericles: "Our constitution . . . its administration favors the many instead of the few; this is why it is called a democracy." In Plato's *Republic* he sees an argument for a method of achieving justice in the state; in Aristotle's *The Politics* he reads of "the elements and characteristics of democracy." In Athenian civilization and philosophic speculation he recognizes the cradle of our democratic ideals.

It has been said that Hitler is determined to destroy the values of society first fully developed in the eighteenth century. It would be interesting to ask the average citizen what the meaning of this statement is. He may tell us that Hitler is determined to destroy the

British Empire, or that Hitler is the enemy of "our way of life"; but it is doubtful whether he can trace "our way of life" back to its origins in the eighteenth century. A student who has taken our survey course should be able to do this.

Before presenting the neoclassical literary and artistic works of the eighteenth century we present a frame of reference on the monarchical ideal of the absolutist state which found its greatest apologist in Hobbes and its perfect incarnation in the French monarch who declared "*L'état!—c'est moi.*" The student must see elements which this ideal of government had in common with the absolutist states of the ancient Near East, with their semidivine monarchs, their infallible leaders; he sees this ideal too in its relation to the Roman Empire, in which the emperors were deified. He inevitably identifies this ideal of government with the one which our President has called "the most discredited form of government." He comes to understand that the current notion of the leader as the embodiment of the will of the state has been a dominant one before today.

As part of the frame of reference for the study of the humanities in the eighteenth century we also present the ideal of rationality. We demonstrate why this age is so commonly labeled "the age of reason" by showing the effects of this confidence in reason as an instrument for discovering truth, on natural science, religion, and the sciences of man. We show how this rational trend eventuated in the "philosophic radicalism" which was the ideological motivation for the English, American, and French revolutions for independence from absolutism and which found expression in the writings of Locke, Rousseau, Paine, and Jefferson. In the controversy between Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine the student analyzes the arguments advanced by the traditionalist pleading for a reverent attitude toward the old order and those given by the advocate of radical change. In the lecture and the readings on philosophic radicalism and in the entire series of lectures and readings on pre-Romanticism and Romanticism, he is oriented in humanitarianism, equalitarianism, libertarianism, and individualism as ingredients of emerging democracy in the eighteenth century; he learns the meaning of "the rights of man," "natural rights," "social contract," "consent of the governed." He sees the growth of faith in the common man and in

his potentiality for perfectibility through reason cultivated by education. He comes to realize that the ideas, even the phraseology, of the American Declaration of Independence and Constitution can be understood better when studied in relation to eighteenth-century philosophy.

The understanding of individualism as an integral element of democracy is prepared for earlier in our course by a lecture and readings on humanism in the Renaissance, the new respect for individuality and diversity as contrasted with the restrictions on the individual by feudal and ecclesiastical regulations in the Middle Ages and with the strict enforcement of uniform belief. The student becomes aware that the ideal of individual human development was deeply rooted in the culture of the Greeks, which was so eagerly studied by the humanists. An earlier study of the ancients has prepared him for this understanding. He realizes that the humanistic respect for the dignity of man was a deep and characteristic current of the Renaissance, so well expressed in Shakespeare's lines:

What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving, how express and admirable! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals.

Through his reading of religious writings—the Psalms, the Prophets, the Gospels, the student identifies this evaluation of man with the Judaic-Christian tradition of Western culture—the status of man “a little lower than the angels,” the capacity of man “to beat down the flesh, the world, and the devil,” and to imitate Christ. In eighteenth-century respect for individual human nature he sees, then, the culmination of the noblest aspirations of Western man—aspirations that went into the making of democracy. He understands what is at stake in the world today, when, as he is aware, the individual is endangered; he realizes that although the rights of man as a political and economic being may be endangered by ideologies antagonistic to democracy, the greater danger is to the concept of the nobility of human nature and its possibilities for perfection.

The concept of the relation of the One to the Many, the one state and the many individual human beings—a concept mastered by the student in the study of Plato's theory of reality—becomes concrete for him when he considers contemporary social conflicts which make

the creation of a just balance between the rights of the individual and those of society the great problem of the twentieth century. The problem is exemplified for him in his study of nineteenth-century expressions of the individual in conflict with society: Ibsen's dramas as specific situations illustrating the conflict, Emerson's "Self-reliance" as a philosophical statement of a possible balance between the One and the Many. In the social philosophies developing from the Industrial Revolution he sees as earnest a search for justice in the state as that which Plato made.

The concretized, emotionalized expressions of ideas in some of the poetry and art included in this course take on larger significance when viewed in relation to the mental climate of the ages in which they were produced. Gray's celebration of the "rude forefathers of the hamlet," Burns's elevation of individual sense and worth above rank and wealth, Millet's portraits of the common man, and Wordsworth's depiction of simple types of humanity are indices of the deep current of humanitarianism that flowed into the stream of democracy. And how but in the light of Shelley's passionate love of liberty and intense hatred of oppression and tyranny can we present his more mature works, his "Mask of Tyranny," his *Prometheus Unbound*? How can we explain the bitter pessimism of Byron and his fierce thrusts at despotism without relating them to the intrenchment of authoritarianism after the wiping-out of the principles of the French Revolution at the Congress of Vienna—a situation so closely paralleled by the darkness of tyranny in Europe today? In the poetry of Walt Whitman we have an unusual opportunity to present poetic statements of many of the basic democratic concepts; in it we find emotionally heightened expressions of the best in the philosophy of democracy. Some of the most acute observers today are pointing out that democracy is too intellectual and that its basic principles must be emotionally presented so as to make a deep appeal. It is apparent that this needed emotional element can be found in many works of literature and art, and that when our students are stirred by them, a strengthening of the foundations of democracy is achieved. The presentation of such literary and artistic expressions of the basic ideas of democracy may well be kept in mind by instructors who are selecting materials for courses in the humanities.

What has been said about the aspects of our course which strengthen the foundations of democracy means clearly that we are engaged in teaching values: the values of liberty, justice, freedom of speech, respect for human dignity and individuality. In a crisis like the one today, when these values are endangered and their opposites are asserted and widely promulgated, we are inclined to emphasize them as absolute values. However, through the historical method of viewing concepts in relation to a matrix of material culture, we are able to point out that these values which we consider fundamental in democracy have been arrived at as final goods through experience; that experience has shown their practical usability in the arena of life for achieving the greatest happiness of the greatest number. We do not, then, impose these values on our students; we try rather to create a belief in them by showing that, from a historic perspective, they have yielded most abundantly toward the good life which has been man's quest through the ages.

These values are largely social ones. However, in so far as we contribute to the student's personal enrichment and emotional adjustment, we are contributing to the strengthening of democracy. From our survey course in the humanities he can be helped in formulating personal values for himself. For example, his thinking on "the pursuit of happiness" may be greatly influenced by a critical reading of Aristotle's conception of the rational choice of moderation as a means for happiness, by a psychoanalytic interpretation of Euripides' *Hippolytus*, by comprehending the ideal of the well-rounded man in Arnold's "Sweetness and Light," and by contact with Carlyle's notion that happiness is not the *summum bonum* for man.

The method which we employ in handling the materials of our course presents to the student a value in action—one that is essential in a democracy. Intellectual tolerance should result from the diversity of opinion represented in such a course: widely differing philosophies, master-works of thought and literature expressing the extensive range of Western man's speculation and emotional attitudes. In our course are many mansions: if materialism is found in Lucretius, idealism is found in Plato; if the student is brought in contact with skepticism in Hume, he also comes to understand the deep religious faith of Thomas à Kempis and Immanuel Kant; if he be-

comes aware of the profound influence of the concept of evolution on modern thought, he also learns of the Nominalist-Realist controversy in the Middle Ages; if he is introduced to the pragmatism of William James, he also acquires an understanding of Thomas Aquinas; if he reads Karl Marx's interpretation of history, he also reads Augustine's. Such diversity of opinion is appropriate for the curriculum of a school in a democracy; it is the application of the right of freedom of inquiry. Horrified by the episode of the burning of the books in Germany, which symbolized a conception of education as indoctrination in a single point of view, the student values his freedom to study any subject and to read anything to which his interest leads him. He sees that in such a course as ours, in which many points of view are considered, we are striving for an understanding of each as a part of the tradition of Western culture. From contact with a diversity of opinions and philosophies of life the student may attain a genuinely liberal education.

If we can teach the student the necessity of understanding and of being tolerant of many views which have operated as vital values in other people's lives, if we can make him aware that freedom in reading and in discussion is democracy in action, we are making an important contribution toward strengthening the democratic ideal. We will not be excessively confident in assuming that the student who is given a historical perspective of the development of democracy and an understanding of the values associated with it will have a firmer devotion to it as a way of life worth preserving and defending. Nor need we fear that the student who is helped through the study of the humanities to understand the bases of the new despotism will desert the democratic ideal for it: he will recognize in its anti-intellectualism, in its "thinking through the blood," a complete negation of democracy's crowning glory of man, his rationality; he will see in it the deadly disease resulting from Romanticism's emphasis on emotion as an instrument for attaining truth; he will see in its glorification of the superman a repudiation of democracy's faith in the common man; he will understand that the philosopher-kings in Plato's *Republic* are different from the ruling few who, Hitler says, must rule because of their popularity and force. His faith in democracy, having deep roots in an understanding of the past, will not be as easily

eradicated as if it grew in the superficial soil of contemporaneity. Too frequently today we find the attitude that the humanities embalm the eternal verities but do not have an immediate relation to the struggle between democracy and fascism. We do not wish our democratic society to be destroyed: we can contribute to its preservation by making the humanities active agents in strengthening an understanding of its tradition and in inculcating its values.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN: TEACHER OF COMPOSITION

ARNOLD MULDER¹

It seems likely that many students have read the famous passage in the *Autobiography* in which Franklin tells how he learned to write, without suspecting that it is a complete course in composition. There may even be instructors who do not see the connection between the conventional course over which they preside and the methods the boy Franklin worked out for himself. Yet, inevitably, because common sense amounted to genius in Franklin, the system he devised for himself must be at the heart of any course in composition; we of 1942 have not added anything important that was not implicit in his scheme. If the millions of boys and girls who flock to the colleges and universities every fall had Franklin's passion to learn to write, and Franklin's diligence in application, all the texts in composition would instantly become dispensable and all instructors in writing would lose their importance in the educational process. Students in composition need no other teacher in writing than Franklin, and the author of the *Autobiography* has reduced all the texts that are necessary to a few simple sentences. Fortunately for the professors the students do not know this. Franklin writes, referring to his teen age:

About this time I met with an odd volume of the *Spectator*. It was the third. I had never before seen any of them. I bought it, read it over and over,

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and was much delighted with it. I thought the writing excellent, and wished, if possible, to imitate it.

There is probably not a course in writing worthy of the name that does not do likewise. Imitation of other writers is so obviously a first step for the learner that the trick would have been invented by the teachers of today if the ancients, millenniums before Franklin, had not suggested it. Stevenson, playing the sedulous ape, was, of course, only following Franklin, as Franklin was following, however unconsciously, his predecessors. Many great writers who never took a formal course in composition learned in the same way—because there is in the nature of things no other way.

But at this point a strange fact obtrudes itself that once more proves that the letter killeth. Teachers of writing have been known to insist that their students shall do what Franklin did—get a volume of the *Spectator* and imitate it. They have felt all the greater confidence in their method because Samuel Johnson advised would-be writers to “give their days and nights to Addison.” They overlook completely the important fact that Franklin had enough common sense to try to learn writing from a contemporary; the *Spectator* papers were hardly a dozen years old when the boy Franklin discovered them, and they were hardly more than half a century old when Johnson made his famous pronouncement. Boys and girls are instinctively right when they consider it a bore to express themselves in the idiom of Addison or of anybody else who has been dust these several centuries; if Franklin were teaching himself the art of writing today, he would almost certainly imitate some such person as Ernest Hemingway or Robert Frost or James Joyce or George Santayana.

The passage in the *Autobiography* continues:

With this view I took some of the papers, and making short hints of the sentiment in each sentence, laid them by a few days, and then, without looking at the book, tried to complete the papers again, by expressing each hinted sentiment at length, and as fully as it had been expressed before, in any suitable words that should come to hand.

Whatever elaborate techniques the modern teacher may have devised, the discipline that Franklin imposed on himself must be at the heart of them. The teacher of today is under certain disadvantages that the boy Franklin did not face. If the teacher had only one student and if he could live with that student day and night,

he might be able to control the kind of assignment Franklin gave himself; with thirty or sixty students it becomes an impossibility. Franklin had character enough not to cheat at solitaire. How many students working for a grade could reasonably be depended upon not to cheat themselves in such an enterprise of learning to write by trying to imitate an easily available contemporary author? But by hook or crook, in many various ways and through many various techniques, the instructor of today uses Franklin's method. The sample sentences and paragraphs and whole compositions that help to make the rhetoric texts the bulky volumes they are serve the same purpose the *Spectator* papers did for Franklin.

"Then I compared my *Spectator* with the original, discovered some of my faults, and corrected them." In so doing he found that his vocabulary was deficient—just as the teacher of composition inevitably discovers that student vocabularies need enrichment. There are, of course, a thousand ways of building vocabularies, not any one of them guaranteed to work with all students. The boy Franklin invented his own technique, and it is probably as good as anything in use today. He had been experimenting from time to time with writing verse, and he reasoned cannily that because of the necessity for finding rhymes and for fitting words into meters, verse writing was likely to give one a stock of words. So he took it up again.

He did more. Selecting some prose stories (for the sake of brevity I am compressing Franklin's already highly compressed compendium of a course in composition), he turned them into verse.

And, after a time, when I had pretty well forgotten the prose, I turned them back again. I sometimes jumbled my collection of hints into confusion, and after some weeks endeavored to reduce them into the best order, before I began to form the full sentences and complete the paper. This was to teach me method in the arrangement of thoughts.

The composition text is likely to give it a more pretentious name; the boy Franklin understood that order is writing's first law, as it is supposed to be heaven's. But whatever the particular techniques he employed, this New England printer's devil understood fully that he was engaged in practicing his scales; he did not pretend that he was writing masterpieces, he was merely trying to make himself master of a set of tools.

By comparing my work afterwards with the original, I discovered many faults and amended them; but I sometimes had the pleasure of fancying that, in certain particulars of small import, I had been lucky enough to improve the method or the language, and this encouraged me to think I might possibly in time come to be a tolerable English writer, of which I was extremely ambitious.

There we have a complete course in the technique of writing. And it is worth something to have Benjamin Franklin as our teacher in composition.

Learning the use of the tools is important, as the Boston apprentice understood; learning to "become a tolerable English writer" is far more important and far more difficult. Even Franklin could not compress the rules for this process into a paragraph, for the simple reason that those rules are one with the story of his life; the whole of the *Autobiography* is only half the story, for the record of his many varied activities stops in the middle of his career.

There is, I believe, far more misapprehension as to what is necessary to "become a tolerable English writer" than there is about the way in which the tools of language are to be sharpened. The fact is, of course, plain that not one in ten thousand of those who take courses in composition ever succeed in becoming "tolerable English writers." If Franklin had kept on reading and imitating Addison, making a god of the manner itself, he would almost certainly never have realized his ambition. Franklin in time became one of America's truly great writers because he became one of America's truly great doers. The fact is not sufficiently well understood that all great writing is the record of great doing—not necessarily physical doing, creating governments or performing experiments in electricity, or fighting battles; but without experience there is no subject matter in the true sense, and without a subject even a Wordsworth could not write a great epic.

Learning to have something to say is in the end far more important for one who wants to "become a tolerable English writer" than learning the tricks of mere composition. The latter are not by any means to be despised; they have an importance suggested by Franklin's painstaking self-discipline in acquiring them. But they blossom into banality or futility or perhaps worse yet into preciosity, unless those who acquire them acquire also experience worth recording.

This is something that cannot be taught in a college, even by genius; it can, of course, only be lived, and the curriculum is different for each one doing the living. Colleges are sometimes blamed for turning out so few "tolerable English writers." This is unreasonable; colleges do not, properly speaking, give courses in writing; they merely try to condition the student so that he will be in position to take the courses for which life may give him an opportunity. Franklin became a great writer not because he played the sedulous ape to the style of Addison but because he forgot Addison and became Benjamin Franklin—just as Abraham Lincoln became a still greater writer because he forgot to be a writer; doing saved him from preciosity.

Somewhere recently I read a flippant remark that one of the important qualifications of a teacher of composition is that he shall *not* be a "scholar" bloated with academic degrees. There is just a tiny mustard seed of truth concealed in the flippancy. Franklin and Lincoln and Thoreau would have been poorer teachers of writing had they spent the years of their precious days of early manhood and middle age taking courses and still more courses. Any one of the three knew a million things important to writing that cannot be taught in courses: the velvety feel of a planed pine board, the honest hardness and dependability of the head of a hammer or ax, the straightness of a stone wall that one's own hands have built, the grain of a rail that one's own ax has split, the shock of an electric spark that one's own kite has drawn from the clouds. Millions of bits of knowledge, for each person different bits, that can be learned only by actually experiencing them. Yet it is of such stuff that great writing is made, and for the want of it whole acres of printed matter suffer from pernicious anemia.

How is all this to be applied to the modern educational process? Every student who has been put through the mill of the colleges will have to live, whether or no. He will have to acquire experience for good or ill. Hence all that would seem to be necessary is to sharpen the tools, as is now done in the colleges, and let life do the rest. Yet even this *laissez faire* policy does not produce many "tolerable English writers."

True, but some teachers and many would-be writers are not content to let nature take its course. They look forward to what they

think of as a "career in writing." The boy or girl who gets an all-A record in Composition I is encouraged to believe (and how ready he or she is to take the hook!) that there is such a thing as sitting comfortably in a book-lined room, with an etching and a painting on the wall to break the monotony of book backs, a bust of Shakespeare on a stand, a polished mahogany desk on which to place clean sheets of paper and other sheets of typescript, a typewriter running so smoothly and noiselessly that it is a spur to inspiration, a discreet secretary to do the mechanical work—in short, the ideal is to be a "professional writer," to arrive at a pleasant goal without the blood and toil and sweat of the journey. Franklin was not a great writer the moment he had learned to write like Addison; and he would never have become a great writer if he had cut himself off from experience and had buried himself in a library or a classroom or had taken courses in writing to the end of his days. The extravagant faith that is being placed in courses, in all sorts of devices of that kind, is one of the reasons why so few ever succeed in becoming "tolerable English writers." They have nothing to write about.

Joseph Conrad gave himself a course in the technique of writing much like the one Franklin followed; but the real reason why Joseph Conrad became more than a "tolerable English writer" was that he had stood on the bridge of a sailing vessel in a typhoon. Eugene O'Neill's road led to the Nobel Prize not because he too endured the sweat and the toil needed for the sharpening of his tools but because he starved in dockside saloons. Charles Lamb has some wise things to say about the techniques of writing, but he learned to write by keeping books in the India House.

Best example of all is Thoreau, because Thoreau consciously broke away from the bloodless ideal of writing as a profession and embraced the sterner discipline of living so deeply that writing would become inevitable. *Walden* (and of course nearly every other Thoreau book) is so obviously a record of direct personal experience that it would be foolish to labor the point. But *Walden* is great first of all because it is the record of great living. If the Thoreau who came out of Harvard with a very pretty facility in expressing himself in words had stopped there, if he had spent himself coining neat phrases about experiences that others had lived and had already

recorded in their books, he would never have achieved one of the great books of our literature. The "Waldens" of any literature have to be lived before they can be written; and each writer has to live his own books; he cannot possibly become a professional writer until he has been a professional doer.

What shall we say, then, to the student who has been sharpening his tools (and to ourselves in so far as we have Franklin's ambition to become "tolerable English writers")? Don't look forward to endless courses in writing or to their equivalents. While would-be writers are "taking courses," the real writer is usually busy serving like William McFee as an oiler in an engine-room of a ship, or like Walt Whitman loafing and inviting his soul, or like Knut Hamsun serving as a streetcar conductor in Chicago, or like Robert Frost running a farm in Vermont, or, to go back some centuries, like Chaucer playing an expert role in his country's diplomatic service, or like Milton taking and giving bloody blows in the rough-and-tumble of practical politics. *Paradise Lost* was not written by a "professional writer" but by one who had "been around." Go and do likewise. You may not become a Shakespeare or perhaps even a William McFee, but their technique of educating themselves for the business of writing was sound. Almost your only chance lies in forgetting about becoming what is known as a "professional writer." Save your professional life by losing it.

Benjamin Franklin thus gives us a complete course in writing, not merely the partial course that most instructors offer. The first part of the discipline covered some months or a few years, as it usually does; the second and more important part stretched over sixty or seventy years. But he helped to create a great nation, in part because he was a great writer, and he was a great writer largely because he helped to create a great nation. The price he paid to become a "tolerable English writer" was not too great. That price is seldom too great for anybody.

A FRESHMAN'S READING: THE LOST DECADES¹

GRACE WARREN LANDRUM²

The assigned reading for college entrance, though increasingly liberal, has varied so little that we may judge rather accurately what a freshman brings to his required course in English. My concern is with his voluntary reading as a basis for guidance in this direction after his admission into college.

To ascertain the taste of a prospective class of 1944 I made a survey of hundreds of letters submitted in the spring of 1940 by applicants to the College of William and Mary. Each applicant had been asked to name a few books and periodicals read unassigned in the last two years. I have given scant attention to the periodicals, which range from the *Cosmopolitan* and the *Literary Digest* to the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper's*. I have made general accounts of the books read, with no figures listed but fair estimates of the frequency of their occurrence.

If asked what novel appears oftenest, you would doubtless reply *Gone with the Wind*. It is on practically every list, once a sole entry. What a gigantic effort a nonreading high-school student must have made for this accomplishment. The next most popular book is *Rebecca*. I should rank *The Grapes of Wrath* next, then *The Yearling*, and close to it *Wuthering Heights*, *My Son, My Son!* and *All This and Heaven Too*. For nonfiction the biography of Mme Curie ranks high. *Inside Europe* and *Inside Asia* deserve honorable mention. There is considerable range, e.g., from Franklin's *Autobiography* to *An American Doctor's Odyssey*, *The Growth of the Soil*, *Anthony Adverse*, works of Hardy, and *The Forsyte Saga*. A trail runs backward through Dickens, well represented, and Thackeray (far less popular), the Brontës, Austen, Goldsmith, Shakespeare, Chaucer, with a mention of Plato, and once (to be quite unchronological) Nietzsche. The

¹ Read October 26, 1940, at the College English Association, John Marshall Hotel, Richmond, Va.

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range of twentieth-century novels is chiefly through the thirties, or thereabouts. The drama, except Shakespeare's, is quite negligible, and lyric poetry is not stressed, though some applicants who treat reading as a hobby mention it with enthusiasm elsewhere in their admission material.

The voluntary reading of the class of 1944 listed for the college administration is clearly the freshman's best. It would compare well with that of his parents in most cases. It represents generally a home with a comfortable family reading table, the Book-of-the-Month or a Literary Guild selection on top. It is probably rather more choice than the reading of the adults in the family, except in the case of professional parents with their specialized books and periodicals. Is it not our business to see that the freshman keeps up the quality of his high-school years and, if possible, surpasses his nonprofessional parents in depth and vitality of taste?

As one means of accomplishing this we should in the freshman year extend the choice of good material heretofore overlooked, books obviously without difficulty but pleasurable and congenial enough to suggest comparison with the student's own experiences. For lack of a better name I shall call this material the "lost decades."

We recognize that the freshman faces not only more extensive assignments than he previously has met (except in the highest sort of preparatory school) but a bewildering whirl of excitement, especially fraternity pledging, other activities begotten by students and by the administration also; that he promptly loses a sense of leisure and often reads almost nothing unassigned beyond the periodical sought not in the library alcove, where there are riches, but at the rainbow-colored magazine rack at the favorite drugstore. I fear the average freshman really loses during the session the relish for good material he once had. He may graduate with no regard for reading as a *sine qua non* of a privileged life, and follow the trend of the average adult reader. Unless one be concerned with literature as a direct or indirect means of livelihood or be a cultivated man of leisure, one is steadily more absorbed in the strictly contemporary. His first refuge is the best seller, the detective story; then he becomes absorbed in magazines of descending value, finally in the newspaper, and all too rarely in the Bible, which is practically never a new interest. If my

picture is dark, examine carefully the habits of your middle-aged and elderly relatives and friends and remember that a statesman, or a Kittredge, with a detective story for a *Nachbuchlein* is not included.

Perhaps no one deserves an A.B. or B.S. until after a probation of five years after the completion of his college courses. But since we shall continue to confer it on schedule time, we should take our freshman in hand to establish some habit of reflective reading that will make him measure up in later life as a better reader than his non-college associates. As a means to this we may open to him certain material as a distinct pleasure even in his crowded academic years. Despite his thronging duties he must early, if at all, become an industrious, even a patient, reader.

His preferences as shown by the survey are far from discouraging. Furthermore, the freshman usually comes to college with excellent intentions, real plasticity, and willingness to be guided, unless, unfortunately, he has come only to please parents ambitious for social prestige, nothing more. Such a student who has no real ambition scarcely survives the mental strain for more than a session.

The college entrant will normally show certain marked distastes. Preachments will not kill them. Only the skilful individual guidance, for which his instructor seldom has time, since careful analysis and even joint reading may be needed, will lead the recalcitrant to enjoy kinds of books for which he has developed a dislike. I am not hopeful that he will find in Scott the delight felt by his grandparents and great-grandparents, especially his southern forebears, who, by blazing hickory fires in plantation family circles, devoured Scott, re-read him, and if possessed of means sometimes owned two complete "Waverley" sets. A motion picture would doubtless stimulate some advance reading. I think it seldom leads backward to a novel. Incidentally, I wonder if the unprecedented vogue of *Gone with the Wind* was not increased by readers anticipating the amazing film spectacle. The popularity of *Rebecca* may perhaps be accounted for in this way, as well as the fortunate relish for *Wuthering Heights*. If we were as alert as our youngsters about oncoming film productions, we might gently point them ahead of time to something in which they would find subtler values in the novel than on the screen. *David Copperfield* proved a charming exception to the usual loss of

these. But, as I have noted above, Dickens still lives respectably, with his harsher contrasts, his sociological import, while Thackeray, with his nineteenth-century decorum, his scheming mammas—much as some of us perhaps prefer him for style and flavor—may, beyond *Vanity Fair* and the rare beauty of *Henry Esmond*, which needs most careful presentation—and seldom gets it—seem to a freshman decidedly more antiquated. A year or so ago I re-read *Pendennis*, fancying myself an eighteen-year-old boy or girl, and reluctantly decided against it for any prescribed reading. George Eliot, *Silas Marner* excepted, which everybody reads before college, seems practically lost and may not be capable of revival, though it is hard to see how *The Mill on the Floss*, which also has been filmed, would fail to arouse. For new material the student should certainly make acquaintance with *The Egoist*, *Evan Harrington*, *Richard Feverel*. He will not need much urging to go further into Hardy, whom he hardly knows except through *The Return of the Native*. If he has studied this carefully before, do not dull it by assigning it in freshman English. Yet this is precisely what we sometimes do in a freshman course. We assign *Macbeth* or *Hamlet*, requiring only blurred, hurried re-reading with no fresh point of view and a monotonous required “book report” (tedious phrase!) instead of some well-thought-out topic of our own, new to our reader. Only a little advertising should lead the student into more Jane Austen and the Brontës. What if we give him lesser material, Trollope for the shirker of Thackeray? *The Cloister on the Hearth* for someone really stirred by his course in medieval and modern history and willing to undertake something considerably less voluminous if less exciting than *Gone with the Wind*?

There is much material in the later years of the nineteenth century and in the first decades of our own, by which especially I mean the lost decades. By way of illustration I must mention that to a 1939-40 group of freshmen, chiefly non-Virginians, I admit, Thomas Nelson Page was practically unknown. His black gentlemen, no matter how much the Cavalier South has been overdone, are as true as the boisterous, fascinating Mammy who tongue-lashed Scarlett O'Hara. Ellen Glasgow's *Barren Ground* deserves wide acquaintance. The beautiful work of Sarah Orne Jewett makes interesting

background for the New England renaissance of today. Howells certainly has value, if only for purposes of comparison. *Babbitt*, now apparently lost, may be known not only as a literary curiosity—source of the only English abstract noun developed in the twentieth century from a character in fiction—but may be compared with *Main Street*, in its gain in restrained diction and condensation. *The House of Mirth* and *The Age of Innocence*—but not the potboilers of Edith Wharton—deserve some examination. (Her supreme accomplishment, *Ethan Frome*, our freshmen seem to know.) Ernest Poole's *The Harbor*, though a model of bad punctuation, is still timely. Frank Norris' contribution to American life still has value. A bookish freshman, fairly well read in attested material, could write a diverting term paper on the best sellers of our century, sampling a few of them, which would give as good training in practice in bibliography and footnotes as does the source paper we always assign. He might thus be able to exercise some critical opinion, which the ordinary topics rarely permit. Again, to know something of the reading his parents enjoyed might enable him to understand them better. They are sometimes more mysterious to him than his grandparents, who are accepted as having already acquired a trifle of the quaintness that a half-century or more usually brings. He should go back to Conrad, now fading, and know more of Mark Twain than the imperishable boys' stories and *The Jumping Frog*. Kipling should survive beyond a reader's nursery days, and Stevenson beyond early adolescence. If a student has chuckled over *The Late George Apley*, why would not Henry James's *The Bostonians* be supplementary? Some of the great older and later Continental novels should lie on the freshman's path. Of course he would enjoy Tolstoi or Undset and might be led to *I Promessi sposi*. The really mature should attempt *The Magic Mountain*; the less, Mann's Biblical trilogy.

Essays should be included. Since sophomores often retain approving recollections of Bacon, a freshman, if inclined, might read all the half-hundred essays. Stevenson needs re-emphasis. But essays in general require some class study.

In the usual required course in English literature the student will read more or less feverishly, happy if he has made an honest attempt at all assignments, the greatest of our literature in several genres.

Not the sophomore, feeding on the best the world affords, barring the Greek, but the freshman, must be led to leisurely reading as a pleasure never to be lost.

Certain approaches are recommendable. The sociological need not be stressed. The freshman may already have had far too much of it. Literature should aid in the interpretation of social history but not exist for it. Thus Morris' *News from Nowhere* rightly has its place for a reader interested in economics and Utopian experiments, but *Silas Marner* was created as a work of fine symmetry and characterization, not to illustrate the industrial revolution. Literature above all else is an art. Yet, though aesthetic values are primary for us and our really imaginative students, they must not be the exclusive ones for the really inartistic. Merritt Hughes, of Wisconsin, an admirable scholar, has remarked wisely: "Among most men interest in literature for its aesthetic and disciplinary values will never rival their interest in it as an interpretation of life and a guide to living." To this suggestion as to general, interpretative reading let us add the somber words of Dr. Johnson: "The only end of writing is to enable the reader better to enjoy life or better to endure it."

There should be some, but not insistent, emphasis on the historical interest. To many historians historical novels are anathema. Let our students understand that they are valuable for romance and atmosphere. I trust we may except the unwearying, genuine flavor of *Henry Esmond*. A reader may develop a critical mind in weighing fact and fancy in general. Such a mind may enjoy *Ivanhoe* and the blustering mirth of Thackeray's *Rebecca and Rowena* and perhaps want more of Scott, especially the Scottish novels, of which, except through *Guy Mannering*, he has scarcely ever heard.

The biographical approach to almost any literature is especially in keeping with the temper of the time and should be utilized. (But let us avoid the bastard novelized biography.) We make too little of our great treasury of letters. Those of Keats, the most poetic we have, a freshman might be led to buy in the "Everyman" edition, almost as complete as the de luxe Buxton Forman edition. Charles Lamb's fascinating letters, the brilliant ones of Jane Welsh Carlyle, the charming ones of Stevenson, and, for the maturer mind, Meredith's should be sampled. Our students usually get only a detached

letter or two in an anthology, little calculated to arouse genuine interest in the writer's personality.

Approve judicious skipping, then turn the student loose among the stacks, if he is so fortunate as to have access to these, and let him make at least a superficial pound-and-ounce acquaintance with our voluminous authors. In a survey course, except in lyrics, we usually nourish him by the apothecary weight only. Now and then urge him to buy a favorite classic. The poorer student, I have found, is generally the book collector. Owning a book he may perhaps re-read it. When he is willing to re-read, he is treating literature with the same dignity as he does great music, which, if once appreciated, he will crave repeatedly. (In passing let me note the pleasure our students, even those not professedly musicians, find in buying excellent victrola records.)

In discussing a freshman as a reader I have obviously spoken chiefly of the average student. I have omitted the genuine intellectual, who happily does exist. By way of proof I submit a few pleasing facts about some applicants for exceptional scholarships at the College of William and Mary. (I choose this college as now most familiar to me.) One lad of sixteen put in his time before the required interview by examining the books on ornithology in the college library and frankly expressed disappointment at the paucity. Another, while waiting, read Nietzsche. Still another, whose voluntary reading included Plato, was quizzed by the head of the department of philosophy and not found wanting. Another sort of reader, more often woman than man, I must admit, is a sincere lover of poetry. While starving in our first English course because of the dearth of poetry, a group, in a dormitory bedroom, may be reading Spender, Auden, Yeats, and perhaps for their own pleasure dropping into verse. Such readers are often pariahs in the college world, weary of bull sessions dealing with the fiftieth round of men and women, religion, occasionally politics, the movies, professors' costumes and foibles (perennially interesting), week-ends, blind dates, incipient and waning love affairs. Another reader about whom we need not worry is the avowed specialist in science or fine arts. Laboratory or studio enthralls him to a degree not understood by many of his classmates. Though his range of reading may be limited and not likely to be ex-

tended far, he has an abiding intellectual or artistic interest and need not give us real concern.

All our "reading gentlemen"—or ladies—to quote the Oxford term, need our friendship, and we need theirs. Sometimes they are shy about confessing that they may enjoy us as much as they do their college mates. We should expect to seek them, share enthusiasm, and be sought with no more self-consciousness on their part or ours than a football aspirant would feel at practicing overtime with the coach.

To reiterate, my thesis is that the freshman mentally equipped to find a college course enriching should be led by gentle methods to establish a lifetime habit of regarding sound reading as an essential. Then he would not start on a railway journey without provision for his mind, thought of pleasurable in advance and not secured from the chance offerings of a railway station news counter. Of course he should have developed an interest in current affairs. But he should not lose the zest and the power to live imaginatively in great fiction, both old and new, in drama, in serious essays, which, though I have not really stressed them, of course should have been included in voluntary reading. He should be able to enjoy analytical articles without pictorial illustrations to ease his path. If he has ever loved to read noble poetry, he may continue to do this. But he will not become or remain a cultivated reader if he has not been a patient one in his college years. If he has such patience as to return to some admirable book he has enjoyed in youth, he will prove a person of rare inner resources. If the imagination thoroughly nourished by sound taste continues to thrive, the "good life" will expand into a rich harvest field where one may be a solitary but never a lonely reaper.

ENGLISH IN WARTIME

A SYMPOSIUM BY COLLEGE TEACHERS

After the declaration of war upon us by the Axis nations, it seemed to the editors of *College English* that the members of the College Section should, as soon as possible, co-operate in determining how best to fulfil our special responsibility throughout World War II. As a first step, we invited twenty-five teachers of English in colleges and universities to suggest how we should meet this professional emergency.

The Planning Commission of the N.C.T.E., at their meeting in Chicago during the Christmas holidays, and the College Section, at their meeting in Indianapolis with the M.L.A., considered general and basic wartime policies for the National Council. The result of these deliberations will be presented in the March *College English*.

To assemble a preliminary survey of opinion on the teaching of English in World War II, we had to act quickly in order to meet the deadline for the February issue. Nine letters from college men and women came back in time to be included in the symposium. The weakness of the small number, however, is overcome by the strength of the unified and obviously representative character of the responses. Teachers of English believe in the permanent value of the work they are doing. In peace or in war the discipline of the humanities is a way to decency in human relations. Those who have written for the symposium agree that our time of emergency requires of us, as teachers of English, a more vigorous concentration than ever upon clear expression and broad, permanently vital reading.

We will need to make curriculum changes, and individually we will perform special wartime duties; but the initial message from outstanding college teachers is that we must do the job for which we are trained: help others to realize the power which emanates from great literature to live humanely in the midst of conflict.

I

No doubt there will have to be curtailment of classroom courses in English as well as of other courses in the curriculums of our schools and colleges; and no doubt here and there expansions may be needed. Both may be salutary. Careful thought should be given them, and it will be. There was never before a time when patient scrutiny and investigation so

characterized the efforts of educators as they do today. There was never before so much exact experimentation to determine what is wisest. Leaders in education have brought improvement in the past, in their pressure for progress, even in their incessant shifts of emphasis and their shifting catchwords, which are launched, worked hard, then replaced.

I hope that in the time ahead the study of literature for literature's sake may still have place; that literature may still be looked on as a record of human thought and feeling and a storehouse of the past. From the reading of the monuments of many periods, and only from this, can the types, laws, history, and changing character of human thought be illustrated. The tendency toward emphasizing the merely contemporary in the classrooms of wartime days needs no reinforcement. Its advocates are many and vigorous. There is need, however, of sympathetic understanding of man's record in the past, if only for the steadying effect this may have on our understanding of the present; and here there is real need for reinforcement.

In brief, while we emphasize the practical and contemporary as we should, and curtail excursions into the minutiae of literary history, into text problems and problems of interpretation, and into overspecialization, I hope that we do not sacrifice the ideals of culture and a liberal education.

LOUISE POUND

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA

II

I surmise that the momentary shift in our teaching of our subject ought to be slight, though it will be important. We shall, of course, give a fresh emphasis to democracy and Americanism; but probably the shift will not be momentous.

What some of us will do, no doubt, is to teach other subjects, citizenship, for example, as in the last war. We may be asked to give instruction in military correspondence, etc., and I'm ready to serve; but that will have little to do with our proper academic responsibility, and I myself should not be inclined to boast about any such service as a departmental achievement.

KARL YOUNG

YALE UNIVERSITY

III

December 17, 1941. The first thing for us to realize as college teachers of English is that we are not training soldiers but that now as always our contribution is to our students as future men and women. Even the "great tradition" and the "democratic way" they will learn better by

observation and practice than by professorial or literary indoctrination. We must do all in our power to make our work count to them as individuals and to make it real enough so that it can help college work compete with the urgent appeal of practical affairs. We must act so as to show them that their lives and ours will continue, altered somewhat but not wrecked.

We shall have to abandon some of our favorite specialties, if they are remote from the natural interests of a normal but unspecialized person. We shall have to abandon, if we have had it, the goal of making undergraduates carbon copies of "Ph.D.'s in English." To be less occupied with the minutiae of literary history will not mean abandoning of "standards." It will give us more time to devote to meaningful literature, to the intelligent reading of the best from the past and the better of the present, of literature that can in some respects be a part of experience. In composition we have more reason than ever before for trying to see over our chins, to give up the petty refinements of literary English, to become positive instead of negative, to encourage better writing of actual, purposeful, modern sorts. This does not mean business letters or Army paper work but just clear-cut expression of ordinary ideas in a modern idiom and in forms actually written and read today. We can sometimes help students clarify their attitudes by encouraging them to reflect enough on their own situation to be able to discuss it in words rather than leave it in vague, unresolved moods.

In short, we now have good reason for sloughing off some matters that we have become a little suspicious of and for concentrating on what should constitute our essential work in peace as well as in war. We can no longer afford to be precious or snobbish or highbrow but rather must illustrate in our work the realism that students are being forced to accept in their own lives. This does not mean surrender of standards or ideals but a fresh selection and emphasis in accordance with a new and human perspective.

P. G. PERRIN

COLGATE UNIVERSITY

IV

I heartily agree that English teachers should determine what changes are to be made in English teaching rather than bend to the pressures of hysterical or selfish groups. But we English teachers have a greater obligation than merely to defend our position. Our position is creative. We stand for the liberal tradition of Western civilization, and we are, by virtue of being English teachers, devoted to interpreting and disseminating its best values. In a world which has abandoned itself to force, our obligation increases as these values are threatened.

During the last war many teachers were guilty of forgetting their humane pursuits in an orgy of hatred which they vented in persecuting imagined enemies. How far we have advanced from such inhumanity is indicated by a report of a speech in the morning paper, urging men not to forget that "there are people with culture, art and kindness in these [enemy] nations, people just like we are, and they have played no part in bringing on war." When a journalist achieves such sanity and tolerance, the English teacher must rise even higher. He must, I believe, first and foremost show that he embodies the values he teaches. While hatred and hysteria mount, he must maintain in word and deed his awareness that war is never an end in itself but at best only a lamentable means which has been forced upon us. The good that may follow this upheaval will not come about by any miracle. The will for a just peace and a better order will not suddenly appear: It will exist only if it has been preserved and nurtured through the war. This is our task.

Applied to the curriculum—a small consideration when compared with our outlooks and attitudes—this means that we must not teach hatred, jingoism, or propaganda. We must insist that no emergency is so great as to justify abandoning the larger truth. The greatest emergency, on the contrary, is the present threat to liberality and intellectual freedom. Our task is to preserve and champion the only values that can save the world after the present fever has been purged.

With such a purpose in mind, some valuable changes in curriculum might be attempted. Literary as well as composition courses might dwell upon the humane tradition, for by studying it we shall arouse enthusiasm for it and thus keep our students' minds on the long view and the larger issues. They will have more than enough stimulation to hate. We must compete, with a vital, sincere, and enthusiastic affirmation of the worth of the individual. Let us *be* wise, humane, creative, and let us teach what we are.

CHARLES CHILD WALCUTT

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

V

It would seem to me that if our present curriculum in English is thoroughly sound from the point of view of the long-run intellectual and literary good of our students, no changes should be made in it as a consequence of the new war, except possibly in such details as the selection of particular texts for discussion and the emphasis with which we present them. On the other hand, if our program appears to us now not to have

been altogether sound, I think we should take every advantage of the present crisis to re-examine what we have been doing in terms of fundamental educational and cultural ends. I suspect that some changes may be forced upon us by circumstances beyond our control, but I very much hope that we will not be rushed into making hasty adaptations of our subject to the apparent needs or emotions of the moment. We have done altogether too much of that in the past generation, and I am sure that much of the confusion of thinking and values which preceded the beginning of this war can be directly traced to the propensity of not merely ourselves but nearly all educators to concentrate on expedients and devices suggested by passing situations rather than to discover and hold fast to the fundamentals of our discipline.

R. S. CRANE

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

VI

Neither we nor our students should function in the classroom other than as complete human beings. Hence it should be inevitable that the teaching of English, like the rest of our life, should be profoundly affected by our entrance into the war. Now less than ever before should we be guilty of ignoring that these young people bring to the work of the college course preoccupations, perplexities, and hopes growing out of the life that impinges so sharply upon them. We should betray our trust if we did not seek to make the study of English language and literature a means for clarifying and ordering their understanding of themselves and of the war-torn world about them.

But this does not mean that we should be content to make hasty changes in our practices and procedures, designed to indicate a superficial recognition of the war situation. Special courses may undoubtedly be introduced to meet specific needs and curiosities. The important changes that I envisage would not, however, be merely "for the duration." And, above all, they do not imply the use of our English classes to whip up feeling in the light only of the present military conflict. We shall have to stand firm, no matter how shrilly the zealous but misguided demand that we be superficial, unscholarly, unscientific. To seek to impose upon our students unthinking emotional acceptance of even the worthiest slogans would be in the end disservice to our cause.

The changes that I hope for, though precipitated by the war, will be equally valid for the peace. Teachers of English will be challenged by the present crisis to scrutinize their work to determine how fully it serves the

end of preserving the humane system of values which is our most precious heritage through carrying it alive into the hearts of those they teach. They will succeed only if they strive to bring into the college classroom a continuing responsiveness to the nature and concerns of the human beings who are their students. The experience of literature will thus become an important means of developing the awareness of alternatives, the sense of human dignity, and the balanced judgment required of those who are to be the "carriers" of the democratic tradition.

We shall, I hope, accept frankly the responsibility of helping our students to approach the literature of the past and present with eagerness and with increasing capacity to discriminate between what is anachronistic and destructive and what is worthy of preserving. Together with our students we can make the study of our language and literature a source of strength, a means for forging a passionate yet reasoned belief in the values we are defending. This will enable us to contribute not only to winning the war but also to winning the peace out of which can come a fruition of our democratic ideal.

LOUISE M. ROSENBLATT

BROOKLYN COLLEGE

VII

I feel that our teaching of English is likely to be changed as a result of our entrance into World War II, but it seems to me that it will be most unfortunate if it is hastily modified. On the whole, it is my view that the changes which come should be changes that are necessary whether we have war or not and that the strengths of our English teaching—and indeed of all teaching in the humanities—must be the same whether or not armed hostilities are going on.

In these times, above all others, we need to reassert the value of the humanities in making people intelligent, understanding, and humane. The instruction which we give, both in composition and in literature, must encourage clarity of thought, accuracy of expression, and the development of the powers of the imagination through which we participate in the experiences of others. It seems perfectly true that we shall have to introduce some new technical courses in order to develop quickly the ability of speakers of other languages to handle English, and it is certain that we must emphasize afresh the value of our cultural tradition. Neither of these calls, however, for a revolution in our way of doing things.

WARNER G. RICE

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

VIII

During the first World War, I expressed a credo for those times. I searched in my files. Here it is as it appeared in the *Nation* (New York), May 4, 1918, page 528:

ENDURING VALUES IN LITERATURE

TO THE EDITOR OF *The Nation*:

In our colleges and universities, in connection with the present urge towards nationalism and internationalism, we should teach the literature of England and America as reflecting the social, religious, and political ideals of our people. But we should not do this to the neglect of the permanent function of literature.

There is a sense of enduring values in great literature that is timeless—beyond the present ghastly world tragedy. The soldier who wrote from the trenches that it was the recalling of bits of poetry he had memorized years before which saved him from insanity, suggests in part that sense of enduring values. So also does the man who sent back from the fighting line: "On such a day as this, one wishes to read well-expressed words which deal with eternal things."

We should realize that if this country is to avoid the narrow vocationalism of Germany, among other essentials, teachers of literature must co-ordinate with the necessary work along restricted professional or vocational lines the cultural qualities of great literature. We should reach through literature the best spirit of national patriotism and the coming internationalism. "Literature exists to please—to lighten the burden of men's lives; to make them for a short while forget their sorrows and their sins, their silenced hearths, their disappointed hopes, their grim futures."

Let us give to those of our colleges and universities who may still pay the supreme sacrifice in this colossal tragedy a sense of the enduring value of culture and the humanities—life's imponderables. We should be interpreters of literature to students keenly responsive to the moral values of life. We should let them realize those values through the integrity of such artists as Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Browning, and Hardy.

In these times it is still my creed for teachers of English and American literature.

GEORGE R. COFFMAN

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA

IX

Our first sharp "No" to the question, "Can the teaching of English remain unchanged by our entrance into World War II?" must not lead us headlong into the office of a ministry of propaganda. We must not forget that we are educating young people not for the next three years alone but

for their entire lives. If students must be quickly conditioned for the war years, let the social scientists undertake that job. Our subject must influence personality on deeper and more permanent levels. One of our duties is to keep our students, now more than ever before, in the great stream of humane Christian culture which comes from the past. In times of turmoil like these young people need desperately to grasp firmly ethical truths that have been tested by time. To attempt to prepare them for a completely unknown future or even to fit them supinely into a war-torn world is to be faithless to our subject.

Never in the history of the world was provincialism in time and place more dangerous. To study only contemporary books now is to offer no release from the present confusion. To study only or chiefly American literature is to encourage the state of mind that produced purblind isolationism.

Let us remember that the deepest convictions and the most salutary emotional attitudes are not won by direct attack. *Macbeth*, properly taught, can produce a better understanding of the character of Hitler's immoral power politics and its destructive effect upon Germany than the ringing invectives of Winston Churchill. The ways of imagination and emotional analogy are the deepest currents of the human mind. In those subterranean channels the permanent impulses to action are formed and their direction determined.

In brief, let us not in a mad rush to be immediately practical forget the place of English in education. Let us not become street-corner orators or advertising agents for this or that aspect of defense. Our main effort must be, as always, to keep alive those generous individual and social impulses which make and preserve civilization. So let us keep on our academic shirts. Let us not pull them wildly off and toss them into the fire of the world-conflagration.

OSCAR JAMES CAMPBELL

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

CURRENT ENGLISH FORUM

I wonder how the Forum would decide the choice in two sentences recently presented in class discussion: "What could you expect, (his, he, him) being what he is?" and "I was not surprised at its being (she, her)."

D. J. H.

In both sentences either nominative or accusative forms are possible, as reported by Curme in his *Syntax*, pages 155 and 33, the choice depending on the level of usage concerned. Formal English uses the nominative case in both constructions; colloquial English, frequently the accusative. The genitive case apparently is not used before a verbal in an absolute construction—at least it has not been reported by descriptive grammarians.

Is the word "his" ever used as a pronoun in a sentence like this: "The strangers knew where his farm was located"?

F. B. G.

In origin and meaning the possessive form *his* is a pronoun. It is a descendant of the genitive case of Old English *he*, and its meaning depends on the noun for which it is substituted. In function it is an adjective. As Sweet points out in his *New English Grammar*, Part I, page 75, any possessive pronoun may be regarded as a pronoun in the genitive or as a pronoun used as an adjective. And, we may add, a complete description of a possessive pronoun should include both its pronominal and its adjectival features.

Would the appositive in the following sentence be set off by commas or not? "Mr. Roberts (,) the social science teacher's (,) room is on the first floor."

V. C. W.

Usage is divided; some writers use commas here, and others do not. The present-day tendency seems to be away from commas in such a construction; however, there are sentences which require commas around possessive appositives for clarity. For instance, in the sentence "Mr. Roberts, the social science teacher's, brother is here" the commas make

it clear the appositive is possessive, and not nominative. "Mr. Roberts, the social science teacher's brother, is here" has a different meaning, and the same sentence without the commas would be ambiguous. If no ambiguity is involved, the use of commas around such elements is a matter of style, to be settled subjectively.

In the sentence "That he is a worker is certain" a noun clause is the subject of the sentence. Is the sentence complex? If one should remove the dependent clause, there remains no independent clause; and an independent clause is considered necessary in a complex sentence, is it not?

E. A. W.

This is a question of definition. Some grammarians prefer to define the complex sentence as one which contains one independent clause and at least one dependent clause which must be mutually exclusive. Such grammarians call the sentence cited a simple sentence. Others do not use the test of removability but allow the independent clause to contain a dependent clause as one of its elements. The latter is by far the more usual analysis, and it causes no confusion when it is followed consistently. Many teachers straighten the matter out for their classes by pointing out, when they take up complex sentences, that a complex sentence can be *analyzed* into two or more clauses but not necessarily *separated* into two complete clauses.

What is the consensus of current opinion on the use of quotation marks or underlining to indicate titles of books, newspapers, and other pieces of literature?

A. C.

In formal usage (such as academic writing) the usual practice is to use italics for titles of books, magazines, long poems, newspapers, etc., that is, for pieces of writing which appear as whole volumes; and to use quotation marks for titles of stories, poems, reviews, etc., which usually appear within a whole book, magazine, or paper. Informal usage, as found in many periodicals, capitalizes the principal words in the title and uses neither italics nor quotation marks.

JAMES B. McMILLAN

NEWS AND NOTES

NEWS

In order to develop a closer relation between high-school and college teaching, the faculty of Baldwin-Wallace College, in northeastern Ohio, has inaugurated a series of conferences for teachers, planned to occur at least once a semester. Over one hundred and fifty teachers from more than fifty schools attended the first conference on November 1. The subject was the teaching of English.

Two reports of progress made by the Commission on Teacher Education of the American Council on Education were made in November. "Midway in the Teacher Education Study," by J. S. Matthews in the *Curriculum Journal*, explains what basic problems in teacher education were defined by the Commission and how these problems are being systematically studied in seven widely separated teachers colleges. The *Newsletter* of the Commission gives information about ten regional conferences on teacher education which were held in the North-Central area last spring. Each one had essentially the same program—including an address by a superintendent of schools on what is expected of colleges and an address by an educational psychologist on learning problems in college. Before the regional conferences were held the Commission had sponsored a study of teacher education in liberal arts colleges, consisting mainly in the examination of twelve representative colleges. During the present year the Commission is sponsoring a plan by which local directors in liberal arts colleges instruct their colleagues in self-analysis and experimentation.

The editors of *Soviet Russia Today* call our attention to an article in that magazine asserting that Mikhail Sholokhov, author of *The Don Flows Home to the Sea* and the earlier *And Quiet Flows the Don*, is an orthodox and active member of the Soviet Communist party. This they cite as evidence that the Russian government does not muzzle literary men and that they do not necessarily write mere propaganda. The article gives the impression, which we have no means of checking, that except in personal ability, Sholokhov is not an isolated phenomenon.

THE PERIODICALS

The bugbear of writers and publishers, accusation of plagiarism, has troubled Daphne DuMaurier, author of *Rebecca*. Writing in the *New York Times*, Frances R. Grant compares *Rebecca* and a novel published six years ago, *A Sucesora*, by the Brazilian author Carolina Nabuco. Answering the implied charge against Daphne DuMaurier, Harrison Smith, in the *Saturday Review of Literature* for November 29, explains that the theme of the second wife who enters a home dominated by the spirit of the first wife dates back at least to *Jane Eyre*. It is inevitable that different authors imagining this situation would include similar details—servants loyal to the old mistress, pieces of furniture evocative of the first wife's personality, etc. The Brazilian novelists' treatment of the theme is essentially different from Daphne DuMaurier's. In *A Sucesora* the second wife is inferior to the first wife both in appearance and in culture, but the second wife triumphs in the end because she has become pregnant whereas the first wife was sterile. The Gothic romanticism of *Rebecca*, on the other hand, is entirely Miss DuMaurier's.

The critical point of view recently expressed by Van Wyck Brooks has become a center of reference in the controversy "on our literature today." Mr. Brooks is attacked in the *Partisan Review* for November-December, by Dwight Macdonald, who regards the repudiation of "secondary" writers (Joyce, Proust, Eliot, Dos Passos, and others) as an ominous sign of the drift toward totalitarianism. Dorothy Hall partially supports Mr. Brooks in "The Function of Literature," which appears in the *Antioch Review* for fall. Specifically, she is concerned with the confusion between social science and art, between literature and propaganda, and she feels that Mr. Brooks is right when he urges that literature should lead in the search for a better way of life in the future. The liberal attitude toward literature, however, produces a confusion of values. Books are judged as social or political statements; Hemingway is praised for the signs of transition in *To Have and Have Not* and blamed for distorting the facts of the Loyalist defense in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. The truth is that literature should dramatize history incidentally, for its main function is, by means of imaginary deeds and thoughts, to express a set of values. The writer in the deepest sense is inescapably a moralist who reveals and judges not only people but the possibilities inherent in life itself, and he must do this mainly by suggesting emotional values and awarenesses. *U.S.A.* is a defective work of fiction because Mr. Dos Passos has not defined values in terms of which we may sympathize with the successes or failures of his

characters. William Faulkner, who is much more difficult for social critics to handle, expresses a sense of values which stems from his sense of the inviolability and autonomy of each individual. If literature truly illuminates the nature of human experience, it can be trusted wherever it leads.

The difficult task of explaining the critical position of Edmund Wilson is undertaken by Edward Fiess in the fall *Antioch Review*. Mr. Wilson cannot be disposed of as a Marxist critic; he is fundamentally opposed to the neo-humanists; and he is too much aware of social values to become a merely aesthetic critic. It has been said of him that he is at his best in correcting overemphasis on either the aesthetic or the social values which critics are prone to overemphasize. The philosopher Whitehead markedly influenced Mr. Wilson at the time he wrote *Axel's Castle*, which demonstrates the growth out of nineteenth-century literature of a rift between naturalism, dominated by science, and symbolism, dominated by an extreme type of romantic aversion to science. The clarity and value of the criticism rises from Mr. Wilson's philosophical opposition to dualism, which he, like Whitehead, considers unwarranted by the real nature of science. On the same ground he opposed the humanists' theory of "one law for man and another for thing." Though for a time he was predominantly influenced by Marxism, Edmund Wilson has insisted that the Marxist critic is wrong to evaluate art on the basis of its "literal conformity to a body of fixed dogma." He distinguishes between long-range and short-range literature, pointing out that our "proletarian literature" often owes its excellence not to recent social doctrines but to the American tradition of *Leaves of Grass*. In recent essays Mr. Wilson is impatient with Marxism because he finds that it is too mechanistic to serve the literary critic. The solution may be that he will return to Whitehead's general way of thinking, which fosters the belief that there is no essential duality between external nature and the human mind perceiving it.

A clinic on the short story, held in the *Saturday Review of Literature* for November 22, discloses the facts (reported by Harry Shaw) that serious magazines such as the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper's* now give only about one-third of the space to short stories that they gave twenty years ago. Mr. Shaw believes that the main reason for this decline is the improvement of the informative article in style and organization. The writer of articles has stolen the story-writer's techniques of suspense, vividness of anecdote, and colloquial directness, and the reading public wants information. More heartening to lovers of fiction is the companion

article, "Little Story, What Now?" by Bonaro Overstreet, who concludes that the short story has become a different kind of art from its nineteenth-century forerunner, which emphasized plot. Events no longer stir the imagination as they once did. The question is rather what is the effect of events upon human motives—fears, wants, prejudices. During the past several decades the short story has become a more and more expert medium for the expression of our deep concern about human moods and motives that have shown themselves to be far less transparent than we once thought they were.

When the Brazilian thinks of the United States, he says, "Formidavel, Fabulosissimo," and the reason, according to Florence Horn (in *Harper's* for December), is that he has been impressed by the movies. Brazilian children dramatize American history—the civil war, cowboys and Indians; visitors from Brazil see whether they can recognize the picturesque features of New York, Chicago, or San Francisco, and they find that they are not disappointed by the reality of American cities, American industry, or American wealth. Brazilian women study interior decoration in the *American Home* and costume in *Vogue*. They are encouraged by the American woman's independence in marriage and in business. Parents are disturbed by the model of an unrestricted life for boys and girls, but they would rather take the risk than have their movies censored. So far, the government has not permitted pictures satirical of Hitler or Mussolini to be shown, but the police of Rio have had trouble in keeping Brazilians neutral. It is customary to warn audiences that they must not demonstrate their feelings by flashing a neutrality statement on the screen before any war photograph is shown. Finally, Brazilians appreciate pictures which are critical of conditions in the United States. That such pictures as *The Grapes of Wrath* are sent from America gives them confidence in American democracy.

A broad sampling of American criticism in the 1870's and 1880's, with emphasis upon the central figures, enables Benjamin T. Spencer (in *PMLA*, December) to show what were the main issues of "The New Realism and a National Literature" in the minds of American writers. Whitman had called for a national literature which would exhibit the general, essential American characteristics, but his appeal had little effect. Hope for a national literature was dim in the rising materialism of the Gilded Age. Because of the new realism, however, the subject appeared in a new form. Howells agreed with Emerson that the American writer should re-

ly upon norms within himself and treat the local, the common. Unlike Whitman, who repudiated foreign models, he believed that American writers should adopt techniques from the English and also from the French and the Russian. To Howells the vigorous and independent spirit of the West did not seem, as it seemed to Emerson, a national trait. Rather, he believed in the "large, cheerful average of health and success and happy life" in America, and he felt that American life could best be written about in terms of the different regions because he thought the country too large and diversified for any pervasive national spirit. Together with Garland, Cable, Eggleston, and others, then, Howells encouraged "local color" writing, which for a time was predominantly accepted as the best type of American realism.

In the 1880's reaction against the local-color realists' claim to be the "American school" was expressed by Steadman and Maurice Thompson, and most effectively by Julian Hawthorne. They protested against the shallowness of a realism depending on dialect and typography and urged that Americanism is a point of view, not a special subject matter. By the time of Whitman's death, Charles Dudley Warner and Richard Hovey argued that American writers should reject the trivialities and vulgarities of realism in favor of our national types, incidents, heroism, and charms of nature. In his later years, Whitman lamented increasingly the delay, which he thought the realists helped to cause, of "Patriotism, Nationality, *Ensemble*, or the ideas of these, and the uncompromising genesis and saturation of these."

In "How a Novelist Begins," which appeared in the *Atlantic* for December, Julian Green really discusses how a novelist works to make his story whole. He has no new idea of the novelist's art, but his presentation of the directions we have often heard is fresh from his own experience. The novelist who achieves something important is one who preserves from childhood the capacity to feel intensely. He must write out of experience which has been fundamental for him, and he is primarily concerned with creating characters. Too detailed a plan, if followed closely, is probably a sign that the product is a mere technical success, because strongly imagined characters, which possess the author, will move away from preliminary intentions. Baudelaire was right when he said that a novelist must begin with *de très belles phrases*. The right note at the outset gives tone to the whole writing. After the first sentences are written, the novelist's long struggle to live up to his promise begins. A born novelist is a seer who is able to suggest hidden forces behind and underneath the

action. A novel is like an iceberg, which is two-thirds under water, because the author knows how to make the intermediate sentences clear without actually writing them out on the page.

The Marxist theory, according to William Phillips writing in *The Partisan Review*, is a kind of half-truth because it overstates the correspondences between the historical context and the literature. It overlooks "The Intellectuals' Tradition" of detachment. The history of European literature demonstrates the relationship of sustained literary creation and an established intelligentsia. In the Middle Ages the church provided for it; in the later periods the large countries only have been able to support such a class. American literature has been handicapped by the lack of a strong intellectuals' tradition, and the consequence is that writers have periodically striven for a unified outlook and then returned to a clean slate all over again. The Concord group was precarious, as later groups such as the regionalists or the proletarian writers have been precarious. *The Education of Henry Adams*, tracing the author's desperate search for some central tradition, reads like a diary of our speculative conscience. American intellectuals have been torn between the urge toward some degree of autonomy and an equally strong tendency toward self-effacement or merging with the popular mind. Now, once again, the intelligentsia are renouncing the values of group detachment as they permit themselves to be drawn into the tides of prevailing opinion.

The life of Stephen Vincent Benét is a story of personal integrity, friendliness, and intellectual poise, as told by his brother, William Rose Benét, in the *Saturday Review of Literature* for November 15. Taken from the charming anecdotes in which they are expressed, the impressive facts of Stephen Vincent Benét's life include his feeling of security in boyhood, due to a kindly, intelligent father, and his early acquaintance with army life and its traditions. When very young he formed the habit of writing, influenced by a very normal range of literature from the Romantics to Kipling and the pulp adventure tales. One is impressed by his courage during the years before *John Brown's Body*, when he worked to make a place for himself by his fiction, felt the spring running dry, and then had the confidence to stake everything on the original venture of the Civil War poem. Throughout his career he has believed in the American democratic ideals, and his later years have been filled with opportunities for socially valuable work, which he has accepted.

The regular schedule was interrupted at Stephens College for a week in which every student was free to choose one project for continuous study. The student's choice included the class and the instructor. In the *Journal of Higher Education* for November, Zay Rusk Sullens explains the satisfying results in a world-literature class. The amount and quality of reading done by the students is surprising. One who selected Goethe as her subject read Ludwig's biography, Marlowe's *Faustus*, Goethe's *Faustus*, and Eckermann's *Conversations*. Others chose as their subjects American poets, the New Testament, Thomas Mann, and social conventions in the novels of Jane Austen and Edith Wharton. The instructor saw each student for a brief conference each day and for longer conferences on request.

Confusion of values in Shakespearean scholarship is the subject of a discriminating critical essay by Benjamin T. Spencer in the *Sewanee Review* for October-December. Some recent literary historians have been obsessed with the notion of the "Elizabethan Shakespeare," who made judgments and expressed interests remarkably peculiar to the political and social habits of thought under Elizabeth and James. It follows, so the argument runs, that Shakespeare is not understandable unless the reader knows precisely the Elizabethan attitude toward the adroit Claudius, the stable Polonius, and the discordant Hamlet. Mr. Spencer's review of several new books on Shakespeare is an intelligent and winning appeal for breadth of vision.

A summary of the progress made at Harvard during the first three years of experimentation with a remedial reading program appears in the *School Review* for November: "Improving the Reading of College Freshmen," by Walter F. Dearborn and S. Vincent Wilking. In the first year, 1938-39, the use of motion-picture techniques with small experimental groups resulted in a gain of from 251 to 382 words per minute. The classes met for eight weeks, practicing exercises in reading phrases of gradually increasing length and reading prose flashed on the screen at a gradually increasing rate.

In the fall of the second year, 1939-40, all entering freshmen were given reading tests and the lowest 25 per cent were invited to enter remedial classes. The classes met either two hours a week for ten weeks or five hours a week for five weeks. Again, the reading films were stressed. Results were good enough to warrant adopting the remedial program without further controlled experimentation.

During the third year, 1940-41, instructors gave attention mainly to improving their techniques. A manual of corrective reading exercises was prepared, divided into two sections: (1) thorough reading and (2) associative reading, which develops the skill of reading a variety of material to solve a problem. Use of the films and the speeded reading materials continued. In addition, the instructors occasionally discussed techniques of reading and they conferred with students from time to time about their difficulties in their required courses. At the end of the remedial course, the students surpassed the average of the whole group of entering freshmen in rate of reading but were still below the Harvard average in speed and level of comprehension.

THE ATLANTA MEETING

"Our Defense of American Tradition" was the theme of the Thirty-first Annual Meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English, held in Atlanta, Georgia, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, November 20-22. The attendance of nearly three thousand has been surpassed in National Council history only by the Chicago meeting of 1940. At the large sessions—the opening meeting Thursday evening, the general session Friday morning, the Friday evening banquet, and the Saturday luncheon—nearly all the addresses were explications of the convention theme.

Robert C. Pooley, the retiring president of the National Council (succeeded by John J. DeBoer), began the convention by defining the strength and the beauty of the alliance, "One People, One Language." Stella S. Center, of New York University, challenged teachers of English to democratic action by bringing together two fundamental facts: the known scientific techniques of remedial reading and the latent social insecurity in our sixteen million semiliterates. Thomas C. Pollock, also of New York University, spoke on the importance of bringing into the clear the ethical traditions of our literature. At later sessions the need of emphasis upon the American tradition in literature was asserted again by Edwin R. Coulson, Santa Monica Junior College, who feels that the major part of literary study in the junior college should be American; again by John Erskine, who spoke satirically of graduate-school pedantry and considered a turn to the fundamentals of American culture as a step now fully warranted; and again by Andrew T. Weaver, University of Wisconsin, whose address on "The Place of Speech in a Democracy" ended in the recommendation of a re-emphasis on the literature of patriotism.

At the final luncheon, Olive Lindsay Wakefield read the poems of

Vachel Lindsay, and by the quality of her reading as well as by her selection impressed upon her large audience the poet's democratic humanitarianism. The last address was Herbert Agar's vigorous appeal for American action in the world-revolution. He defined America's moral responsibility to help her allies conquer Hitlerism.

The College Section of the National Council held three meetings. After a luncheon on Friday, at which Warner G. Rice, the retiring chairman of the College Section, presided, representatives were elected to fill the places on the steering committee left vacant by the retirement of Merritt Y. Hughes, Fred W. Lorch, and Warner G. Rice. The new committee members are Professor Frederick Hard, of Tulane University, and Professor Porter G. Perrin, of Colgate University.

In his message at the Friday luncheon Professor John D. Wade, of the University of Georgia, spoke as a defender of the humanities. Expertly and suavely he persuaded the College Section to hold to its confidence in the spiritual values and to resist the chaos of a science-obsessed world.

During the symposium on the education of secondary-school teachers, at which Ida A. Jewett, Teachers College, Columbia University, presided, Roy B. Clark, of the Eastern Kentucky State Teachers College, discussed the practical problems of the English staff in a college where adjustment is necessary to the common handicaps of limited budget and unselected student body. Stress on general education in the first two years of study and constant vigilance to keep all phases of the English major's program in balance and up to date are the working principles of the staff in the Kentucky college. Helene W. Hartley explained that Syracuse University offers unusual opportunity to the staff responsible for training teachers; the staff selects those who enter the teaching course from the whole number of English majors who apply. The result is high standards in health, speech, scholastic ability, and ability to interview. A distinctive feature of the Syracuse organization is co-operation of the education department and the English department in planning the course of study. Roy P. Bassler confined his description of the program in action at State Teachers College, Florence, Alabama, mainly to the in-service training, in which the students are advised jointly by members of the English department and the high-school critic teachers. He also stressed the effective attempts which have been made by his colleagues to improve the reading skill of prospective teachers. They have developed a reading laboratory (which will soon be described in the *Journal of Higher Education*), and oral reading is practiced systematically in the literature classes. The most advanced experimentation reported on is the Broad Fields program at

Teachers College, Columbia University, by Lennox Grey. He outlined the traditions, resources, and purposes of Teachers College and the two undergraduate colleges of the university—Columbia and Barnard—and analyzed the needs of the students in their fifth year of training, thus creating a background for the Broad Fields program. Representative of the program is the humanities seminar, where students may begin with historical study, but where they proceed into experience with a wide range of critical methods, from the Aristotelian to the Gestalt. Teachers College is collaborating with a number of widely separated colleges in developing a course of study for teachers of the "new-type curriculum."

The joint program of the College Section and the English Section of the South Atlantic Modern Language Association, held on Saturday morning, with Hill Shine, of Maryville College, presiding, consisted of three addresses. On the topic of "The College Man Looks at High-School English," Reed Smith, University of South Carolina, defended a conservative view of the present active tendencies in the teaching of English. He urged teachers of liberal arts to join the ranks of those who are influencing the teaching in the high schools. He argued that progressive educators, inside and outside the National Council, are weakening the discipline of the English course and leaving the essentials of grammar, correct writing, and sound reading behind.

Clifford P. Lyons, University of Florida, spoke last on "Teaching English to Graduate Students." In a restrained manner he asserted the dignity and the idealism of literary scholarship, pointed out the many temptations to a narrow way of research which the scholar must overcome, and demonstrated the necessity of the scholarly mind to valuable teaching.

Just as this goes on the press, the Section, at its Christmas meeting in Indianapolis, has elected as chairman for 1942 George B. Parks, of Queens College.

BOOKS

FROM BEOWULF TO THOMAS HARDY

Professor Robert Shafer confesses that in re-editing *From Beowulf to Thomas Hardy*,¹ the temptation to expand threatened to increase "the size of the work beyond manageable proportions." It is a question whether he resisted the temptation, for the volumes are nearly twice the size of the last ones. Assuming that the survey course should engender a love of books, one wonders how large an anthology can grow before its bulk defeats the purpose.

What use has the editor made of this increased space? There are two fundamental changes—both of them commendable. First, the type is larger and the spacing more generous. Although the 1931 edition was as legible as is usual with such books, the reader turns from it to the present one with a distinct feeling of relief from eyestrain. Teachers who keep the physical well-being of their students in mind will be grateful.

The second fundamental change is one of organization. Professor Shafer had previously designed the book for survey courses conducted both according to chronology and according to literary types; now he has focused attention upon the historical survey. In order to make the book conform to this single purpose, he has made four changes in its organization: first, he has omitted one table of contents; second, he has divided the work into seven periods, following the usual pattern, though with some simplification; third, he has written for these periods introductions which give the setting and the literary trends; and fourth, he has added a chronological outline, paralleling general with literary history.

Of these changes, the most striking is the addition of the period introductions. Although Professor Shafer modestly calls them a "preface" to English literature, if they were brought together they would make a volume of five hundred pages, and few persons would hesitate to call it a "history." The material is well balanced and reflects the author's splendid background. But the style is somewhat pedantic. Since the book will be used chiefly by beginning students, one yearns for the Goldsmith approach

¹ Robert Shafer, *From Beowulf to Thomas Hardy*, Vols. I and II. New York: Doubleday Doran & Co., 1941. \$3.00 per volume.

—an approach recorded by Professor Shafer in the words of Dr. Johnson: "He is now writing a Natural History, and will make it as interesting as a Persian tale."

Most of us turn gladly from an anthology composed of literary scraps to one that treats fewer authors adequately. The present edition continues this policy and accentuates it; there is a good deal more literature included than in 1931, but it comes from fewer pens. Personally, I do not mourn the loss of the twelve writers eliminated, and I welcome Rudyard Kipling and John Masefield in their stead. But one wonders whether the spirit of Thomas Henry Huxley can rest in peace outside a volume in which Matthew Arnold is liberally represented.

Finally, let me commend Professor Shafer for the inclusion of illustrations. In an era that is avid of pictures, it is wise to use visual means for arousing student interest; furthermore, a number of these illustrations are virtually inaccessible elsewhere.

ERNEST VAN KEUREN

EVANSVILLE COLLEGE

IN BRIEF REVIEW

[Mention under this head does not preclude review elsewhere.]

FOR THE GENERAL READER

Windswept. By Mary Ellen Chase. Macmillan. \$2.75.

John Marston on hunting trips with his son came to know a wild, unsettled country on the coast of Maine. He bought a huge tract and planned a home, which his son built after the father's death. For three generations the spirit of the place and its intangible influence dominated the lives of the Marstons and their friends. The story is beautifully written. Van Wyck Brooks says that the great themes of literature and the "life drive" are those by virtue of which the race has risen: courage, justice, mercy, honor, love. These are the themes of *Windswept*.

All That Glitters: A Novel of Washington. By Frances Parkinson Keyes. Julian Messner, Inc. \$2.75.

What an excellent title! Background: Washington during the twenties, the thirties, and the forties; characters: the politicians, the dowagers of "the 400," the diplomatic corps, the warmongers, the rich, the poor, the newspaper reporters, and the secretaries,

wives, daughters, and poor relations, all come alive and glitter in these pages of a capitol never envisioned by the Pilgrim Fathers. Very readable.

The 1942 New Yorker Album. Random. \$2.50.

The cream of the *New Yorker's* pictorial humor.

Open the Door. By Osbert Sitwell. Smith & Durrell. \$2.50.

These eighteen satirical and fanciful short stories by the distinguished English author are of particular interest when style and theme are compared with the American short story of the same period.

The Strange Woman. By Ben Ames Williams. Houghton. \$2.75.

Against the background of Bangor, Maine, and the timber rush of the early nineteenth century, the strange life of Jenny Hager is revealed. Many people thought her noble; a few knew her to be a woman too emotional and passionate for her own happiness or that of others. A strange and shrewd study of a remarkable woman.

Mr. George's Joint. By Elizabeth Lee Wheaton. Dutton. \$2.50.

This novel has received the Thomas Jefferson Award (a gold medal and \$2,500). George Hill and his wife, Anne, conduct a "jinte" and rooming-houses in certain Texas cities. This is a rich, authentic study of colored people at play—"pleasuring themselves" in the most unmoral and irresponsible manner. The author presents no propaganda or social study. She is interested in these poor people and their wretchedly happy lives, seeing them as people who live as they can.

Season's Greetings. By Herbert Clyde Lewis. Dial. \$2.50.

The day before Christmas found five people living in a rooming-house, each dreading Christmas. The author has made an excellent psychological study of them.

Hotel Splendide. By Ludwig Bemelmans. Viking. \$2.50.

These anecdotes and droll tales of people met in hotel corridors and dining-rooms—of guests, waiters, busboys, and managers—are accompanied by the author's own delightful sketches. A musical comedy based on the book will be presented soon.

Wild Is the River. By Louis Bromfield. Harper. \$2.50.

Bromfield is at his best in this exotic story of New Orleans under the army of occupation after the Civil War. He uses no restraint in picturing the ruthless Yankee plunderers, the aristocratic Creoles, "the mixture of jungle and voodoo and French and Spanish civilization." The young lady from Boston, her aunt, and her brother find in New Orleans a world unknown to New Englanders. The number of vivid characters is large, and some of them are very wise.

A Leaf in the Storm. By Lin Yutang. John Day. \$2.50.

This triangle love story has as a background the present war in China and the flight of refugees into the interior. "Every leaf in the storm is an individual with a heart and feelings and aspirations and longings, and each is as important as the others. Our task here is to trace what the war did to one woman. . . ." Not so well written as his other books, but an exciting and colorful study of the Chinese.

Whittier: Bard of Freedom. Whitman Bennett. University of North Carolina Press. \$3.50.

The author discloses two motives: to dislodge the popular notion of the poet as "a nice old man" and to prove the weaknesses of Albert Nordell's interpretation of the Quaker poet in terms of Freud. Bennett sees him as sincere and vivid, with a rare gift of simplicity, doing his utmost to make America honorably conscious of her traditions, ideals, and destiny.

Good Old Summer Days. By Richard Barrett. Appleton-Century. \$3.50.

Newport, Narragansett Pier, Saratoga, Long Branch, and Bar Harbor during the heyday of their popularity, the plushness of the rich American way of disporting at fashionable resorts, are the subjects of this survey of extravaganza. It is amusing reading, yet portentous of an aftermath such as the present. As a composite picture of immature society it is ironical but not savage, patient rather than bitter.

The Doctors Mayo. By H. B. Clapesattle. University of Minnesota Press. \$3.75.

"The warm and human story of three remarkable men whose lives span a century of medicine, and of the world-renowned institution they built." The father came from England and eventually reached Minnesota in the fifties. The value of this study of three Americans is its emphasis upon the American way of living (as it should be), the personal, family, and professional integrity of three men, their faith in themselves and in humanity, their sense of responsibility. The sons say that the smartest thing they ever did was to choose their parents!

Four Years in Paradise. By Osa Johnson. Lippincott. \$3.50.

The author of *I Married Adventure* has written a fascinating account of the Johnsons' expedition into the heart of the African elephant country. Pictures, not ivory and gold, drew them there—and romance and adventure. To Osa, although she helped with everything, fell the task of making a home in a wilderness much more dreadful than the uncharted Kansas, where she says her grandmother found no Sears-Roebuck catalogue.

Clarence Darrow: For the Defense. By Irving Stone. Doubleday. \$3.00.

In the words of William Allen White, Darrow lives as a man who challenged his times. He criticized society; he fought a social order; and a system was usually the defendant in his suits. Stone develops the personality of Darrow from his boyhood and discusses in detail many of the famous cases which he defended. Darrow defended murderers, Negroes, lynchers, labor unions—always lawsuits of great public interest. "I do not believe in the law of hate," he said. Stone had access to records and papers in the possession of family and friends. He has written a vital story of a complex character's fight for the right as he saw it.

The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1709-1712. Edited by Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling. Dietz Press. \$5.00.

This shorthand diary was concealed for two hundred years. Byrd, educated in England, was an accomplished Cavalier, ruler over 180,000 acres. His enlightening picture of Virginia life neglects not the shocking, the trivial, the personal. It mirrors the everyday life of the patrician and his contracts with his equals, his subordinates, and his slaves. Each morning he read a passage of Hebrew and one of Greek, ate a frugal breakfast, and "danced my dance" (calisthenics).

The Germans: Double History of a Nation. By Emil Ludwig. Little, Brown. \$4.00.

How, Ludwig asks, is it possible for the German race to produce a Beethoven, a Goethe, and a Goebbels? And he proceeds to trace this duality through two thousand years of history, contrasting the creative and beautiful side of the German character with the dominating and warlike. How responsible, he asks, are the German people for nazism, and how important is it for the world to understand the German race, if civilization is to endure?

A Secondary Treasury of the World's Great Letters. By Wallace Brockway and Bart Keith Winer. Simon & Schuster. \$3.75.

A seven-hundred-page sequel, with emphasis upon letters of literary value, to the *Treasury* (with historical emphasis) edited last year. Letters ranging from the beginning of Christianity—letters important, casual, inspired, mean, crafty, and bombastic—but all letters which had their part in the "wave of the future." As Morley says: "Letters make the best anthologies."

Songs of the Michigan Lumberjacks. By Earl Clifton Beck. University of Michigan Press. \$3.00.

The Introduction supplies information new to most readers, adding interest to the ballads—for example: to establish property rights, owners had logs branded, as cattlemen used to brand their herds. This knowledge of the "my day" of the lumberjacks—their food, the tricks they played, and their methods of chopping and hauling—all adds glamor to the ballads which have been gleaned from the memories of living lumberjacks and their friends. Valuable Americana.

Collected Sonnets. By Edna St. Vincent Millay. Harper. \$5.00.

William Rose Benét says of Miss Millay: "In the field of the sonnet she has particularly come to excel, having achieved an almost complete mastery over that difficult form. Few will deny her gift of a gallantry and a fearless beauty to our poetry."

Mission to Moscow. By Joseph E. Davies. Simon & Schuster. \$3.00.

Confidential dispatches to the State Department, journal entries, and personal correspondence contribute to this inside story of Russia by the United States ambassador to the Soviet Union, 1936-38.

The Story of Modern Art. By Sheldon Cheney. Viking. \$5.00.

This attractive seven-hundred-page volume tells the story of the development of modern art from 1791 to 1941. There are three hundred beautiful illustrations.

American Glass. By George S. and Helen McKearin. Crown. \$4.00.

The authors are authorities on glass and are consulted by many universities, museums, and collectors. This huge, attractive volume covers the entire field of early American glassmaking, a subject of interest to a growing number of people. It gives a clear account of the history, methods, mixtures, patterns, and decorations of all glass products. Every type of blown and pressed glass is discussed, usually with pictured examples. If you have any curiosity about glass, you will be fascinated by this book. Three thousand illustrations, charts, and tables.

FOR THE INSTRUCTOR

Shakespeare and Democracy. By Alwin Thaler. University of Tennessee Press. \$2.50.

A collection of essays on Shakespeare, other Elizabethans, and the Elizabethan drama—some new and some previously published. In the first two studies Mr. Thaler reviews the influence of Shakespeare on leaders in the progress toward democracy and particularly Shakespeare's influence on Walt Whitman.

Creative Group Work on the Campus. By Louise Price. Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University. \$3.25.

An introductory part reviews "Creative Group Work in the Larger Culture" and summarizes "New Emphases in Philosophy, Psychology and Sociology." The author then presents an abundance of "Experimental Data from Stephens College and Stanford University." She concludes with a series of recommendations for further research on creative group work, college administration, and personnel work.

The Plays of Henry C. De Mille Written in Collaboration with David Belasco. Edited by Robert Hamilton Ball. Princeton University Press. \$5.00.

Volume XVII of "America's Lost Plays." Five elementary problem plays of the eighties and nineties, somewhat colored by De Mille's belief in the writings of Henry George. Especially popular were *The Wife* (politics), *The Charity Ball* (speculation), and *Men and Women* (prison life).

The Heart of Maryland and Other Plays. By David Belasco. Edited by Glenn Hughes and George Savage. Princeton University Press. \$5.00.

Volume XVIII of "America's Lost Plays." Five popular melodramas of the eighties and nineties, simple in motive and strong in situation, by a producer who was noted for lavishness of stage properties and meticulous attention to the training of actors, stage business, and stage-lighting.

Improve Your Accent. By Inez E. Reade. Macmillan. \$0.48.

An excellent set of exercises on the sounds of English speech which are difficult for students with a foreign accent. No diacritical marks are used; the teacher must demonstrate the proper sounds.

Oral Interpretation of Literature in American Colleges and Universities. By Mary Margaret Robb. Wilson. \$2.75.

A history of the teaching of speech in America. Departing from the influence of English elocutionists, nineteenth-century teachers adopted a scientific approach to speech and oral reading. The period of 1915-40 was one of enlarging the speech program.

The Year's Work in English Studies, Vol. XIX: 1938. Edited for the English Association by Frederick S. Boas. Oxford University Press. \$3.75.

Informative and comprehensive reviews of scholarship on the periods of English literature, literary criticism, and philology and a chapter on "Bibliographica." This volume contains notices of 232 books and 628 articles.

American Isolation Reconsidered. By the Committee on Materials for Teachers in International Relations, American Council on Education.

Review of America's attitude from 1793 to 1939; analysis of the change in international relations effected by the totalitarian powers; and explanation of the new phase in the history of foreign relations in which the national government is committed to a definite program. A two-hundred-page monograph.

FOR THE STUDENT

Language Habits in Human Affairs. By Irving J. Lee. Foreword by Alfred Korzybski. Harper. \$1.25.

An introduction to general semantics written for students in direct and colloquial style and packed with timely examples. Ingenious drawings help to make clear the tricky relationship of word, speaker, and thing.

The Praise of Folly. By Desiderius Erasmus. Translated by Hoyt Hopewell Hudson. Princeton University Press. \$2.50.

A much needed contemporary translation of Erasmus' great satire. Mr. Hudson's sensitivity to the rhetorical skill of the original has enabled him to keep much of Erasmus' rhythm while turning his prose into clear and forceful English. An essay on Erasmus, a rhetorical analysis of the satire, and explanatory notes accompany the text. The volume is attractive in format, binding, and printing.

A Progressive Study of English Composition. By Bernard L. Jefferson, Marcus S. Goldman, and Sidney E. Glenn. Odyssey. \$2.00.

Designed to help the instructor of college freshmen effect an interest in writing and progress toward orderly thinking. The use of words and sentences and the writing of whole compositions are presented three different times "in steady crescendo."

Biography, Varieties and Parallels. Edited by Dwight Durling and William Watt. Dryden. \$1.40.

Twenty-seven biographical essays, collected under such headings as "Dictator," "Statesman of Democracy," and "Man of Business." Most of the biographers are contemporary, and most of the subjects are from the nineteenth century or the very recent past.

At Odd Moments. Edited by Bernard Darwin. Oxford University Press. \$1.75.

An anthology of prose and poetry from a wide range of English literature by an Englishman who knows how to relax when he reads. There is much about sport. The format of the book and the quality of the paper are poor.

Stages of the World. Published by Theatre Arts, Inc. \$1.50.

One hundred clear-cut photographs of stages from the Greek and the oriental to the modern American. Two-thirds of the photographs represent either modern settings for classical drama or the innovations in stage setting for recent drama—European and American.

Tennyson: Representative Poems. Edited by Samuel C. Chew. Odyssey. \$1.00.

A wide selection from the lyrics, four of the Idylls, and *In Memoriam*, divided according to the subject matter of the poems. The *Tennyson*, like other volumes of the "Odyssey Series in Literature," is good in format and valuable for its editorial notes, which are printed at the bottom of the pages.

Business Letters. By Walter Kay Smart and Louis William McKelvey. Harper. \$4.00.

A revised edition of a textbook which explains and illustrates the writing of business letters, classified according to their purposes. A new feature consists of problems to be written in class within specified time limits.

Patterns in Expository Writing. Edited by Helena Gavin and Edna B. Schwarzman. Woodrow Wilson Junior College, Chicago.

An anthology of models for student writing, many of them by students of composition, which illustrate specific methods or kinds of writing such as "Expository Narrative," "Reviewing Style" (the documented or research paper), and "Analysis." The models are usually brief and the classifications are ingeniously practical. Loose leaf.

Patterns in Writing. Edited by Edna B. Schwarzman and Helena Gavin. Woodrow Wilson Junior College, Chicago.

An anthology of models on the plan of *Patterns in Expository Writing*, but composed entirely of student themes.

Harper's English Grammar. By John B. Opdycke. Harper. \$1.20.

A handbook on the parts of speech and sentence construction designed for general use by the high-school student, college student, or secretary. All the essentials are concisely explained and illustrated. The Table of Contents is very general. The Index is comprehensive, but so compact that it may be rather difficult for a student to use.

The Writer's Radio Theatre, 1940-1941. Edited by Norman S. Weiser. Harper. \$2.00.

Ten radio plays selected as outstanding during the past year, all written for broadcasting purposes. Two plays on the radio by Norman Corwin are included: *Words without Music* and *Seems Radio Is Here To Stay*.

John Brown's Body. By Stephen Vincent Benét. Edited by Mabel A. Bessey. Farrar & Rinehart. \$1.32.

Another well-printed edition of the poem. The text is accompanied by a new Introduction, "Brief Survey of the Civil War," and by abundant explanatory notes on the diction, personalities, and historical references.